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## Post Reformation Catholicism in the Midlands of England

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Abstract of a thesis entitled

**Post-Reformation Catholicism in the Midlands of England**

Submitted by

**Laura Anne Verner**

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at The University of Hong Kong

and King's College London

in August 2015

This dissertation examines the Catholic community of the Midlands counties during the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603). While local studies of post-Reformation Catholics have been attempted in other English regions, no substantial body of work has been produced for the Midlands, despite its significance with the Gunpowder Plot and later Catholic Emancipation. The approach has been to endeavour to understand the causes and consequences of recusancy and how this affected the identity of the Catholic individual and community. Also of interest was the methods of innovation the community used in order to maintain adapted forms of devotion. The principal findings and discoveries demonstrate that the Catholic community of the Midlands was, in general, detached from its medieval predecessor, but also did not follow Tridentine teachings; Elizabethan Catholicism was a unique experience. Unable to worship freely, Midlands Catholics resorted to clandestine and surreptitious

practices and proved to be eclectic and fluid with regard to religious doctrine when the occasion demanded.

This dissertation is arranged into six thematic chapters plus an epilogue. This method allowed several key aspects of the continuation of Catholicism in the Midlands to be analysed separately. Chapter 1 introduces the themes explored in the dissertation. Chapter 2 introduces the geographical, political and ecclesiastical jurisdictions of the Midlands, along with the gentry families of the counties. Chapter 3 examines the kinship and patronage networks used by the community to protect themselves. Chapter 4 looks at the anti-Catholic measures implemented by the state, and their effect in the Midlands counties. Chapter 5 focuses on the methods used by Midlands Catholics to adapt Catholic devotion in the absence of priests. Chapter 6 considers the themes of material culture and sacred space, and the innovations used by the community to maintain familiar traditional rituals. Chapter 7 considers how the Catholic and Protestant communities interacted, worked and lived with one another, and how Catholics related with the state, either with resistance or passivity. An epilogue considers the effect of post-Reformation Catholicism in England, and the enduring memory that reverberated through the centuries.

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# **Post-Reformation Catholicism in the Midlands of England**

by

**Laura Anne Verner**

MPhil, HKU

BA(Hons), UNB

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
at The University of Hong Kong  
and King's College London

June 2016



## Declaration

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I declare that this thesis and the research thereof represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualifications.

Signed ..... 

VERNER Laura Anne

June 2016

## Acknowledgements

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It is a welcome opportunity to recognise those who have helped me manage the load of research and writing for this dissertation from time to time. Many people have been generous with help, advice, encouragement and support, and as my term as a PhD student at the University of Hong Kong and King's College London draws to a close, I would like to mention them here.

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## 1. Introduction

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And though our condition be so desolate, that wee can neyther be freed from outward miserie, but by becomming inwardly more miserable, nor complaine of our troubles, but our very complaints are punished: yet an infamed life, being to free mindes more irkesome then an innocent death, we had rather put our vttermost hazards to your highnes clemencie, then seeme with our silence to giue credit to our obliques: to which if wee doe not, it may be imagined we cannot answere.<sup>1</sup>

These words, written by Robert Southwell to Elizabeth I near the end of her reign, rang true for longer than he would have liked. They demonstrated both the difficulties and the ambiguities of Elizabethan Catholicism.<sup>2</sup> The plight of English Catholics after 1558 went unrecognised for far too long by historians, and then for many years the historiography of post-Reformation Catholicism in England was distorted by an attempt to justify and vindicate the community, generally by Catholic historians.<sup>3</sup> The emphasis of these studies slanted towards martyrologies, and indeed was in many ways a natural outgrowth from the martyrologies of the early modern period.<sup>4</sup> They therefore neglected the

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Southwell, *An humble supplication to her Maiestie* (England: English Secret Press, 1600), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> See also F.W. Brownlow, *Robert Southwell* (New York: Twayne, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Charles Dodd, *Church History of Catholicism*, ed. M.A. Tierney, 5 vols (London, 1839-1843); J.H. Pollen, *The English Catholics in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth: A Study of their Politics, Civil Life and Government* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1920); Thomas H. Clancy, *Papist Pamphleteers: The Allen-Persons Party and the Political Thought of the Counter-Reformation in England, 1572-1615* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1964); Peter Milward, *Religious Controversies of the Elizabethan Age: A Survey of Printed Sources* (London: Scholar Press, 1977); Adrian Morey, *The Catholic Subjects of Elizabeth I* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1978).

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas Harpsfield, *Dialogi Sex contra Summi Pontificatus, Monasticae Vitae, Sanctorum, sacrarum Imaginum oppugnatores et Pseudo-martyres; in quibus*



relationships that Catholics developed and sustained with their Protestant neighbours, friends and family members, and tended to take the status of 'recusant' as normative. In recent years, great advances have been made in the history of post-Reformation Catholicism. We now appreciate the variations and fluctuations in Catholic identity, the overlap between Protestant and Catholic communities, and the cross-fertilization at work between Protestant and Catholic culture.<sup>5</sup>

The purpose of this dissertation is to attempt to understand the character of the Catholic community of the Midlands during the reign of Elizabeth I, working in the light of recent advances in the field. Analysis of the local hierarchies and clandestine Catholicism combined with observation on the process of recusancy and church papism will develop a reflection of what

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*explicantur Centuriarum etiam Magdeburgensium, auctorum Apologiæ Anglicanæ, Pseudomartyrologorum nostri temporis, maxime vero Joannis Foxi mendacia deteguntur* (Antwerp, 1566); John Mush, *The Life and Death of Mistress Margaret Clitherow* (written 1586, first printed 1849).

<sup>5</sup> Norman Jones, *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaption* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002); Peter Lake and Michael Questier. (eds.) *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560-1660* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2000); Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott. (eds.) *Catholic Gentry in English Society: the Throckmortons of Coughton Court from Reformation to Emancipation* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); Michael Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c. 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Marie B. Rowlands, 'Recusant Women 1560-1640', in Mary Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society 1500-1800* (Methuen: London, 1985, pp. 149-180); Ethan H. Shagan (eds.), *Catholics and the 'Nation': Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Alexandra Walsham, *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England*, Woodbridge (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1993); Lucy Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

happened among the Catholic community of the Midland counties. Here the aim is to recognise how the counties and region fitted in with the national model of recusancy, and to what extent Catholicism shaped a person's identity. Even given the revisionist research devoted to this question, late-Tudor Catholicism is still not often appreciated on its own merits, thanks to its aura of defeat. In the Midlands, Catholicism was refashioned in many ways in order to negotiate changes at the national level. The value of this study lies not only in a tale of grudging conformity or persecution, but also in the story of an influential series of changes within the regional community.

This study is based on regional research. While county studies are less popular than they once were, when it comes to post-Reformation Catholicism, county studies still reveal the shifting patterns of religious identity and interaction. Elizabethans tended to describe themselves in terms of their county, and patterns of kinship and affinity were often framed by county borders. Moreover, the implementation of the Elizabethan Settlement was organised on a regional basis, although here diocesan borders were as important as county boundaries. There is much to be learned about the progress of Reformation from a regional study. The Midlands seemed a particularly fruitful area to examine, being roughly equidistant between the heartland of government reform in the Home Counties and the more entrenched Catholic loyalism and resistance of the peripheral areas of England. In an early article, Christopher Haigh noted the survival of Catholicism in the West Midlands, despite the absence of seminary priests in that area.<sup>6</sup> This thesis has sought to explore how Catholicism was

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<sup>6</sup> Christopher Haigh, *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 197.

maintained, the forms it took, and the ways in which it interacted with the non-Catholic population.

This thesis examines Catholicism in the Elizabethan Midlands at the local level in order to understand what it meant to be an Elizabethan Catholic in the region, and in particular to recognise how and to what degree the Catholics of the county manoeuvred within social, political and cultural constraints in order to maintain their religious beliefs and traditional behaviours. There is much evidence of a recusant community (laity, gentry and clergy) in the Midlands from primary sources and secondary works. Non-traditional sources such as architecture, art and material culture give some clues as to how non-conforming communities were able to reconceptualise their faith after the Religious Settlement. Even so, a complete regional history of Catholicism in these counties has not yet been attempted, despite the fact that Christopher Haigh referred to the strength of Midland Catholics in 1987, as mentioned above, and, as such, this dissertation makes an original contribution to the field. This study has intrinsic relevance as a local study, but it will also lend comparative value to understand how the Midlands compared with the national model of recusancy.

### 1.1 *Historiography*

Since the arrival of revisionism in the 1970s and 1980s, historians have been forced to re-evaluate Protestantism's victory during the Reformation, and Catholics can no longer be relegated to the fringes of post-Reformation history.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Haigh, 'Catholicism in Early Modern England', pp. 481-494; Haigh, *English Reformations*; Haigh, 'From Monopoly to Minority: Catholicism in early modern England', *Transactions of the*

Comprehensive studies of recusants, and more recently, Catholics and church papists after the Reformation, have offered varying interpretations for the country as a whole. The first, genuine history of post-Reformation Catholicism was John Bossy's pioneering book, *The English Catholic Community 1570-1870*, published in 1976, which remains crucial to the study of early modern Catholicism.<sup>8</sup> Bossy began to erase the historical image of the Catholic Church as corrupt and oppressive by reintroducing historians to an institution that was lively, invested in and adored by its followers. Bossy broke away from the view that the study of English Catholicism equated with 'martyrology', and argued instead that the community was one that adapted to changing times.<sup>9</sup> Bossy lauded the seminary priests and gentry, and argued that post-Reformation Catholicism was not the same as that of the Middle Ages. He used the date 1568, the founding of the Douai Seminary, as the commencement of post-Reformation Catholicism, a new Catholicism that survived Protestantism because of the death of the medieval church.<sup>10</sup> In this sense, his research was overly concerned with the birth of recusancy, and his stress that Catholics must necessarily be

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*Royal Historical Society*, 5<sup>th</sup> ser., (1981), pp. 129-47; Haigh, 'The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation', *Past and Present* 93 (1981), pp. 37-69; Haigh, (ed.) *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Haigh (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1984); Haigh, 'Revisionism, the Reformation, and the History of English Catholicism', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985) pp. 394-406; Patrick McGrath, 'English Catholicism: a Reconsideration', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984) pp. 414-428; McGrath and Joy Rowe, 'The Elizabethan Priests: Their Harbourners and Helpers', *Recusant History* 19 (1989) pp. 209-33; McGrath and Rowe, 'The Imprisonment of Catholics for Religion Under Elizabeth I', *Recusant History* 20 (1991) pp. 415-35; McGrath, and Rowe, 'The Marian Priests Under Elizabeth I', *Recusant History* 12 (1984) pp. 103-20.

<sup>8</sup> John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press Ltd, 1976).

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Haigh, 'Catholicism in Early Modern England: Bossy and Beyond', *The Historical Journal* 45 (2002), p. 483.

<sup>10</sup> Bossy, *The English Catholic Community*, pp. 4-5, 11-12, 106-107, 147.

recusants sits uneasily with subsequent research.<sup>11</sup> Also, his theories of seigneurialism do not necessarily fit within the model of Midland Catholicism, apart from the county of Worcestershire.

Challenging Bossy's work but still arguing for the strength of post-Reformation Catholicism, Christopher Haigh's study of Lancashire suggested that any triumph that Protestantism witnessed was a direct result of local anti-clericalism. Haigh challenged some of Bossy's arguments especially his 'Year Zero' analogy, and instead credited the efforts of the Marian clergy and the laity with the survival of Catholicism during the Elizabethan period.<sup>12</sup> Haigh here took issue with Bossy's view that there was a break between the medieval and post-Reformation church, and argued for continuity within the church. Haigh could not agree with the 'Year Zero' model because some Marian priests were still meeting the needs of the Elizabethan Catholic community. According to Haigh, the Marian priests:

had begun the creation of a separated underground church before the arrival of the missionaries, and individuals and groups were already shifting from conservatism within the Church of England to recusancy (or occasional conformity) and illicit Catholic worship.<sup>13</sup>

To Haigh, the English Catholic community showed greater vitality prior to the Jesuit and seminary missions, which he ascribed to the limited objectives of the missionaries in terms of where they preached and to whom.<sup>14</sup> In Bossy's view, the English Catholic community did not relate to their medieval co-religionists. They were a new model of Catholics, because they lived among conformists.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Bossy, *Ibid*, ch. 8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 482.

<sup>13</sup> Haigh, 'Catholicism in Early Modern England', p. 482.

<sup>14</sup> Haigh, 'Revisionism', p. 419.

<sup>15</sup> Haigh, 'Catholicism in Early Modern England', p. 482.

Haigh, much like Bossy, was concerned with the genesis of the Catholic community, and believed the process to be organic rather than self-fashioning. It seems that the Midland Catholic community took a *via media* in this respect; they were subject to a new mode of religious life, but perhaps instinctively connected to traditional religion.

In the years after Bossy and Haigh published their findings, several other prominent historians followed with their own theories on the development of English recusancy. Eamon Duffy and J.J. Scarisbrick argued that the Reformation was forced onto the English people, a process they neither wanted nor accepted for decades.<sup>16</sup> Duffy contended that Catholicism remained alive and well far into Elizabeth's reign and even beyond in isolated cases, and his approach highlighted the extent to which Catholicism was rooted in the community, and expressed through ritual and by means of material culture.<sup>17</sup> This dissertation relies on the labours of revisionist historians; however, it sees the Catholic community as integrated with larger society.

Differing greatly from both Haigh and Scarisbrick in their varying approaches, Patrick McGrath argued that the Jesuits and seminary priests revitalised the Catholic community from the 1570s onward, and that they, more than the Marian priests and a stubborn laity, kept the faith alive. McGrath accepts

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<sup>16</sup> See Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1984). Subsequently, some historians attempted to register that the Reformation was still a success. See Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England: 1547-1603* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); Andrew Pettegree, *The Early Reformation in Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>17</sup> Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 142.

that the Marian priests contributed to the Catholic community before the missionaries arrived to England, but argued that they could not possibly have enriched the community as much as the seminary priests and Jesuits.<sup>18</sup> This view has been challenged by some historians on the basis that the Jesuits concentrated their teachings too much on the gentry, while allowing the laity to fall into eventual conformity.<sup>19</sup> Haigh claimed that McGrath's writings were a retreat to victimhood.<sup>20</sup>

Other authors have used more localised studies of post-Reformation Catholicism and recusancy to great effect. One example is the history of Catholic recusancy in Elizabethan Worcestershire, written by Vincent Burke. Burke found that the natural decline of Catholicism was prevented in Worcestershire by the efforts of the seminary priests and Jesuits from the Continent. His thesis shows the government's response in the form of anti-Catholic legislation as a failure, one that was not helped by the inefficiencies of the church courts. Burke argued that most of the Catholic community of Worcestershire chose to suffer the penalties of recusancy in silence, although a minority of the county's Catholics did engage in militant activity by conspiring against the government or aiding in foreign plots. He found that some Catholics in Worcestershire endured genuine penalties, both physical and financial, though the economic penalties had only a

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<sup>18</sup> Patrick McGrath and Joy Rowe, 'The Marian Priests Under Elizabeth I', *Recusant History* 17 (1984) pp. 117-118.

<sup>19</sup> Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People*, p. 155 and Haigh, 'Catholicism in Early Modern England', p. 482.

<sup>20</sup> Haigh, 'Catholicism in Early Modern England', p. 483.

limited impact. By the end of Elizabeth's reign the continued survival of Catholicism seemed dependable, though only as a minority choice.<sup>21</sup>

Burke also examined the effect of the geography and landscape on the development of recusancy in Worcestershire, factors that seem to have also been important in Warwickshire. Indeed, other localised studies of recusancy have reached similar conclusions in regard to geography and the placement of Catholic communities. Bossy suggested that the geography of Catholicism was significantly affected by:

the negative factors of difficulty of access for the machinery of government, distance from an economically dominant town, the presence of widespread rural industry or an active maritime coast.<sup>22</sup>

This thesis holds true in some ways for the Midland counties, though it seems that the natural landscape of the county was more important in harbouring Catholics than previously thought. This, along with the impact of seigniorial networks, will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters.

Worcestershire was similar to other Midland counties such as Warwickshire and Staffordshire in that specific areas of these counties had a much higher proportion of Catholics than other areas. Burke argued that the reason for this occurrence was that socially eminent Catholic families reinforced the faith of their neighbours. This is also very evident in certain Warwickshire parishes as well, such as Coughton, Brailes and Long Compton. However, other parishes where Catholics were known to have resided had no Catholic gentry or socially prominent family such as Rowington and Tamworth. Burke's thesis,

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<sup>21</sup> Vincent Burke, 'Catholic Recusants in Elizabethan Worcestershire', unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Birmingham (1972), p. i.

<sup>22</sup> Bossy, 'The Character of Elizabethan Catholicism', p. 39.



therefore, whilst suggestive, cannot be held to describe the overall situation in the Midlands.

My own past research on Catholicism in Warwickshire has been a foundation for this dissertation and for branching out to the greater Midlands. I, similar to Burke, argued that the geography of Warwickshire cradled the Catholic community, enabling them to conceal themselves from authorities and living closely with one another, in most cases. As such, certain areas of Warwickshire, such as the Arden Forest, had a much higher Catholic population than others, such as Coventry. Warwickshire is interesting in that Catholic gentry families offered semi-feudal protection to nearby Catholic laity, but Catholic laity also existed outside of parishes with a strong Catholic gentry.<sup>23</sup>

The recusant history of Yorkshire has long been of historical interest. A.G. Dickens pioneered modern recusancy research in that county. He did not accept the influence that conservatism had after 1559 in aiding recusancy, because obstinate recusancy was not noticeable in Yorkshire until 1577. Dickens argued that the substantial 'work of the seminary priests and Jesuits...arduous proselytism, not the weight of tradition, accounted for the Romanist revival'.<sup>24</sup> Dickens saw great variations between 'survivalism' and 'seminarism'. He argued that Catholic traditions declined from the accession of Elizabeth until the arrival of the missionary priests.<sup>25</sup> J.C.H. Aveling echoed these findings to an extent, but claimed that religious conservatism in Yorkshire was not entirely extinct when

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<sup>23</sup> Laura Verner, 'Catholics in Elizabethan Warwickshire' unpublished MPhil dissertation, University of Hong Kong (2011).

<sup>24</sup> A.G. Dickens, 'The First Stages of Romanist Recusancy in Yorkshire, 1560-1590' (1941), reprinted in Dickens, *Reformation Studies* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 1982), pp. 172.

<sup>25</sup> Haigh, 'The Continuity of Catholicism', p. 37.

the missionaries arrived and eventually turned the conservatives into recusants.<sup>26</sup> He concluded that the post-Reformation Catholic community in Yorkshire had no real organisation before 1570.<sup>27</sup> It is possible, however, that these conclusions were made because the period when the missionaries arrived coincided with the years when the Privy Council initiated stricter penalties against recusants, and therefore they were recorded in documents far more than in previous years.

Differing from both Dickens and Aveling, Eamon Duffy found that conservatism did remain strong in Yorkshire after the Settlement, especially in funeral services. Duffy's revisionist view of post-Reformation Catholicism is that, contrary to long-held views, traditional medieval Catholicism was lively and popular among English parishioners, not exhausted or decayed.<sup>28</sup> He argued that in the county there was 'a slow and reluctant conformity imposed from above, with little or no evidence of popular enthusiasm or commitment to the process of reform.'<sup>29</sup> Perhaps heralding a second wave of revisionism, some research qualifies Duffy's work by suggesting that the medieval church was more diverse than he allows and whilst exhibiting strengths in many areas also saw coordinated changes that eventually led to the rise of Lollardy and Protestantism.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> J.C.H. Aveling, *Northern Catholics: The Catholic Recusants of the North Riding of Yorkshire 1558-1790* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), p. 52.

<sup>27</sup> J.C.H. Aveling, *The Handle and the Axe: The Catholic Recusants in England from the Reformation to Emancipation* (London: Blond & Briggs, 1976), p. 60.

<sup>28</sup> Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 573.

<sup>30</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011); Robert Lutton, *Lollardy and Orthodox Religion in Pre-Reformation England: Reconstructing Piety* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006).

Differing again from Dickens and Aveling, Haigh argued that the Catholic community of Lancashire did have an organised structure before the arrival of the missionary priests. Haigh concluded that while they were not necessarily identical to their medieval co-religionists, they were aided by the Marian priests and could be classified as an ordered group.<sup>31</sup> Haigh argued that the conservative community of Lancashire was prospering even before winning the help of the seminary priests and Jesuits. He concluded:

The argument that recusancy was created by seminary priests credits them with an instant impact that is difficult to accept. If Catholics had conformed until the arrival of the missionaries, if conservatism was almost dead by the mid 1570s, the successes of a handful of men in three or four years defy imagination.<sup>32</sup>

Historians such as Alexandra Walsham, Stephen Greenblatt, Peter Marshall, Peter Lake and Michael Questier have grappled with the identity and culture of Catholics in more recent studies.<sup>33</sup> The findings and conclusions of these studies have been particularly influential to the interpretations and questions regarding Catholicism in the Midlands, and therefore deserve further discussion.

Greenblatt addressed the relevance of communal and individual identity in sixteenth-century England. He took the sixteenth century as the period where a sense of self and individuality can be analysed for the first time in history. Accompanying this was the sense that the self could be shaped and manipulated

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<sup>31</sup> Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, pp. 248-249.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>33</sup> Marshall and Scott, *Catholic Gentry in English Society*; Marshall, 'Faith and Identity in a Warwickshire Family: the Throckmortons and the Reformation', *Dugdale Society Occasional Papers* 49 (2010); Marshall, *Reformation England, 1480-1642* (London: Hodder Education, 2003); Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England*; Walsham, *Church Papists*. See also Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism*.

by the individual, a concept that Greenblatt calls 'self-fashioning'. He argued that 'in the early modern period a change in the intellectual, social, psychological, and aesthetic structures that govern the generation of identities' occurred.<sup>34</sup> While much of Greenblatt's work focuses on the relation between literature and history, some of his views and models have been beneficial in assessing the identity of Elizabethan Catholics.

Michael Questier, in his book *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c.1550-1640*, investigated the Catholic community of England, focusing in particular on two sides of the Catholic community of Sussex; the aristocratic Browne family, the Viscounts Montague, and the lay community. Questier argued that the missionary priests formed post-Reformation Catholicism through aristocratic families.<sup>35</sup> Questier broke down the usual categories of Catholic versus Protestant, and suggested that there was cross-fertilisation between the two groups.

Lucy Wooding's book, *Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England*, dealt with English Catholic identity, community and thought. Wooding took the view that Catholicism was as much a part of the Reformation as the emergence of Protestantism. She argued that the Catholicism of the period was 'far more complex, changeable, and eclectic than is usually appreciated,' and that Catholic identity was less the following of doctrine and more a case of self-definition.<sup>36</sup> She credited humanism with intellectually advancing and reforming Catholicism, and argued that the events of the sixteenth century were an echo of humanism.

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<sup>34</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Questier, *Catholicism and Community*, pp. 288-298.

<sup>36</sup> Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism*, p. 4.

Humanism became Reformation, Wooding claimed, when Henry VIII was desperate for a divorce.<sup>37</sup> Wooding grapples determinedly with the concept of Catholic identity and culture. Eventually, the Council of Trent decreed that it was not possible for a Catholic to put aside loyalty to the pope, attention to good works and tradition. But Wooding sees little immediate compatibility between the doctrine of Trent and the actual proceedings of English Catholics.<sup>38</sup> The theme of vitality and adaptability is woven throughout Wooding's book. She sees change in the character of Catholicism during the Reformation, but does not consider that the contrast was as deep as that portrayed by Bossy.

The significance of 'church papism', that is, of Catholics who outwardly conformed with the English church but remained privately Catholic, was examined closely in Alexandra Walsham's *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic*, published in 1993. Walsham questioned the impact of the less-dramatic church papist against that of the recusant, and concluded that it was the church papist who kept Catholicism alive in England. *Church Papists* marked a change in Catholic terminology. Catholic history had previously been 'recusant history', but Walsham's book brought a recalibration of the historical approach. Both Catholic recusants and church papists were Catholics, but their conduct and sometimes also their ideologies differed. The book also explored the reaction of counter-Reformation clergy and recusants to the church papists. The former often accused the church papists of schism and compromise, constructing a threat to true Catholicism, yet at times accepted that circumstances required certain compromises. Church papism was a necessary

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<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 16, 20.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

choice for conservatives who lacked the protection of a gentry home. Walsham argued that church papists did not always become obstinate recusants after the birth of recusancy, 'Conformity was not always a transient or protracted stage in an uncomfortable inner struggle towards recusancy; it was as often the final outcome of that struggle itself.'<sup>39</sup>

A very relevant study of Elizabethan Catholicism was as it happens that of a Warwickshire gentry family, the Throckmortons. The book, *Catholic Gentry in English Society: The Throckmortons of Coughton from Reformation to Emancipation* (2009), is a series of essays edited by Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott. This book argued that, while 'early modern Catholic history has begun to come out of the cold', much research still remains to be done.<sup>40</sup> Although only the first three chapters deal with the reign of Elizabeth, the essays in this book argue that the Throckmortons of Coughton Court stood for continuity. The family, though some lost their positions at court on account of religion, remained prominent within their own local community, and actually led very similar lives to conforming families of the same social status.<sup>41</sup> The social and familial networks of the Throckmortons in Warwickshire are also explored throughout the book. This theme is particularly relevant to this dissertation, because it seems that all levels of Catholics, the laity, gentry and clergy, depended on protection and support from each other to sustain this covert community.

The formation of English Catholic identity has also been explored by literary critic Alison Shell, who analysed rhetoric and language to gauge the

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<sup>39</sup> Walsham, *Church Papists*, p. 94.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott, 'Introduction', in Marshall and Scott, *Catholic Gentry in English Society*, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Susan Cogan, 'Reputation, Credit and Patronage: Throckmorton Men and Women, c. 1560-1620', in Marshall and Scott, *Catholic Gentry*, p. 69.

cultural phenomenon of self-fashioning, and demonstrated that Catholic culture and identity during the English Reformation were carefully constructed.<sup>42</sup>

Susannah Monta, Brad Gregory and Anne Dillon have analysed the theatre of martyrdom and found that the Catholic community used these opportunities as inspiration and definition for self-fashioned identity.<sup>43</sup> This dissertation argues that Catholicism did not break down with the absence of priests and without access to sacraments, in part because of this capacity for self-fashioning. Lisa McClain's work affirmed much the same findings, asserting that the Catholic community was flexible and adaptable when it came to orthodoxy.<sup>44</sup> She saw this as a conscious choice to disregard Tridentine teachings, whereas this thesis suggests that in better circumstances the community would have followed counter-Reformation orthodoxy, but persecution and spiritual famine hindered this desire greatly.

Despite revisionism, many recent interpretations of the Reformation still have a Whiggish aspect, because many historians continue to insist that religious conflict was inevitable.<sup>45</sup> Haigh wrote in a review that historians have not come far at all since Bossy's book, claiming that 'Catholic history is hard to do, and

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<sup>42</sup> Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Alison Shell, *Oral Culture and Catholicism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>43</sup> Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1535-1603* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at the Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Susannah Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>44</sup> Lisa McClain, *Lest We Be Damned: Practical Innovation and Lived Experience Among Catholics in Protestant England, 1559-1642* (London: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>45</sup> Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism*, p. 1.

harder to do well...But we badly need more work on Catholicism among the lower orders.'<sup>46</sup>

## 1.2 *Defining Catholicism*

Conformity and non-conformity were complicated scenarios and the religious situation in England was less black and white than 'Catholic' versus 'Protestant'. Several terms describing the degree of Catholicism to which one chose to adhere appear frequently in this dissertation. These terms, such as Catholic, recusant, church papist and conservative ought not to be regarded as synonymous, although they could overlap. It is increasingly recognised among historians that when Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558 she inherited a still predominantly Catholic country.<sup>47</sup> There are exceptions to this rule, of course, in the form of radical and moderate Protestants, some of whom conformed to Catholicism during the reign of Mary Tudor. But the majority of English men and women would have accepted Catholicism as the national religion for reasons either personal or political, or a mixture of the two. Throughout the first two decades of Elizabeth's reign, however, they would have had to choose which doctrine, Catholic or Protestant, to outwardly follow, and which to internalise. The term 'Catholic' is used often in this dissertation to incorporate all those who wished to keep the old faith to varying degrees.

The term 'recusant', from the Latin *recusare*, meaning to refuse, is straightforward, though the people who subscribed to it were not always so. Recusancy was a legal category that defined dissenters who refused to attend

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<sup>46</sup> Haigh, 'Catholicism in Early Modern England', p. 493.

<sup>47</sup> Peter Marshall, *Reformation England*, p. 145.



reformed church services and were thereby held to have rejected the Religious Settlement.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, they did not recognise Elizabeth as Supreme Governor of the English church, as they deemed the reformed church illegitimate. What is less clear is whether the first loyalty of recusants was primarily to the queen or to the pope. It is difficult to identify recusants before the late 1570s and early 1580s. In these years recusants began to be greatly penalised and were therefore recorded in Recusant Rolls, and these are the years to which the birth of recusancy can be attributed.<sup>49</sup> The step into recusancy could not have been easy, no matter how strong the Catholic's convictions were. Peter Marshall has argued:

It is important here not to underestimate the strength of the social pulls and pressures that helped to keep people within the orbit of their ancient parish church. To cease worshipping with one's neighbours and move into recusancy was an act of extreme non-conformity in a more than religious sense. For the gentry in particular, to withdraw themselves from the churches where their honourable ancestors lay buried, and of which they themselves were often patrons, must have been psychologically painful.<sup>50</sup>

Even though 'recusancy' is a term that implied rigid non-conformity, it is clear that some shifted in and out of recusancy depending on specific circumstances at the time.

The group of Catholics usually labelled 'church papists' who, in order to avoid fines and appear loyal to the queen, attended reformed services, also had a significant impact on the conservative community.<sup>51</sup> 'Church papist' was and remains a more flexible term than 'recusant'. It was a contemporary label for the group of people who conformed to the Religious Settlement publicly, yet

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<sup>48</sup> Marshall and Scott, 'Introduction', p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), p. 333; Marshall, *Reformation England*, p. 169.

<sup>50</sup> Marshall, *Reformation England*, p. 172.

<sup>51</sup> Walsham, *Church Papists*, pp. 73-99.

privately continued to practice the Catholic faith insofar as possible. Church papists adopted this approach through the whole of Elizabeth's reign; it did not fade with the birth of recusancy.<sup>52</sup> Church papistry would have appealed to the many people who preferred to keep the Catholic faith, but were not prepared to break with the parochial life to which they were accustomed, or who were more vulnerable to the penalties imposed by the state. With these decisions, there would be no complications in being baptised, married and buried in the parish church. The term 'conservative' often coincides with the meaning of church papism, but this word is also used several times in this dissertation to address a community, parish or priest that, while not necessarily non-conformist, was not evidently Protestant in nature and perhaps sympathised with the old faith and those who chose to adhere to it.

Strictly categorising Catholics within these definitions is troublesome, however. Some Catholics often moved in and out of recusancy or conformity, most probably due to the severity of the punishment for recusancy at the time. Families may also have divided along religious lines, or the split may have been visible within a nuclear family with a conforming husband and non-conforming wife and children, often attempting to avoid fines<sup>53</sup> Post-Reformation Catholics were often 'outsiders within', and this must have caused friction within communities and families.<sup>54</sup> Recusancy, church papism and conformity were not just religious but also political issues. Recusancy was an act of civil disobedience that was punishable by fines, confiscation of goods and imprisonment.

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>53</sup> Marshall and Scott, 'Introduction', p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

In reading the secondary works devoted to post-Reformation Catholicism, it quickly becomes obvious that the transition from Mary Tudor's Catholicism to Elizabeth I's Protestantism was anything but absolute. It was pockmarked by the conservative and radical non-conformity of both Catholic and Protestant groups. To understand a period such as post-Reformation England, one cannot overlook the history of the non-conforming community, as this would create a gap and misunderstanding of the time itself. Examining Catholics in the Elizabethan Midlands is an especially appealing topic because such a local study can reveal how early modern society and community was shaped by their religious beliefs. Religious structure changed in England with the Reformation, but not necessarily the fundamentals of religion, and many individuals and communities chose to follow past traditions insofar as they could. The Midlands make for a compelling story. The region differs from the staunchly Catholic north of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and while the distance from London is significant, the region was not peripheral. Elizabethans self-identified with their locality and county, and for this reason, it is unwise to remove Catholics from their home counties and refer to them all as 'English'.

### *1.3 Methods and Approaches*

The interpretive approach of this dissertation began with the identification of the historical sources that were relevant and important to the study.

Consideration was given not only to what could be found in the documents, but also what could not be found, and why. This is particularly important for a study of recusancy, since it was an intrinsically secretive act. That the practice of Catholicism was for many a hidden activity indicated that the community might

have been cautious in generating documents. Similarly, documents written by authorities that accuse and condemn are necessarily biased. That is to say, much about Catholicism and recusancy during the Elizabethan period, in terms of identity, culture and familial networks will never be available in documentary form. The historian must therefore interpret what is available, but also account for what is not available through careful analysis of the known documents, and by what is already known about the subject in question. This is not to say that the historian has the privilege of filling in a gap with creativity, but that one may be able to interpret the reasoning and cause of the gap through careful consideration of what is already known from research.

Catholicism changed but it did not disappear in the Midlands during Elizabeth's reign. The changing attitude of Catholics to religious belief can be interpreted along with adaptations in rituals and self-perceptions. A narrow view of Catholicism – what it was in medieval or modern times or what it ought to be – will not help in understanding early modern Catholic culture. Church papists attended reformed church services and yet considered themselves Catholic. They were not the same as 'Roman Catholics', but it would be a mistake for the historian to deny them the title of Catholic, as they were indeed integral to the non-recusant community.<sup>55</sup>

This dissertation takes a regional approach with the aim of discovering a sense of adaptation in devotion, community and identity. This approach calls for the use of an array of primary sources. The characteristics of sixteenth century local history may be defined by the changes that took place in that period. During this time the essence of sources also changed. More than ever before, local

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<sup>55</sup> Walsham, *Church Papists*, pp. 1-3.

people – not just the government and clergy – generated sources.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, sources were frequently written in English, rather than Latin, and were more expansive about individuals and families, rather than simply mentioning names, property or values. For the first time, there are sources that relate to all classes, and therefore the historian can gain a social perspective of the community from within. Most of the primary sources used in this dissertation were written in English, the exceptions being the Pipe Rolls and the Recusant Rolls, which were written in abbreviated Latin.

Even though by the Elizabethan period many more sources were being written by and about the common people, identifying the Catholic laity of the Midlands has at times proven more elusive than originally anticipated. No diaries or personal papers relating to Catholicism among the Midland community were identified thanks to primary research. Nor were the surviving churchwardens' accounts as fruitful in this area as expected. These deficiencies had to be compensated with such sources as were available at the time of research.

The primary sources analysed for this study are predominantly documents in correspondence with the government, principally found in the *State Papers*.<sup>57</sup> These documents include letters from the Privy Council to local government officials in the Midland counties or to the bishops of the dioceses. The second major collection of sources extracted from the *State Papers* were articles of interrogation, questions for examination and their answers that were

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<sup>56</sup> Kate Tiller, *English Local History: An Introduction* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, 2002), p. 153.

<sup>57</sup> The *State Papers Online*, published by Gale Cengage Learning in 2010 was used exclusively for research on the *State Papers* for this dissertation. This raises an issue in the citation of the *State Papers*, as the manuscript source and online source have slightly different references. The citations used in this dissertation refer to the *State Papers Online* reference.

administrated onto 'traitorous' Catholics, their family members and acquaintances. Most entries relating to recusants in the *State Papers* commence more than a decade into Elizabeth's reign, becoming increasingly frequent from the 1570s and 1580s onwards. Unfortunately this leaves gaps for the early years of the reign, when one can reasonably assume that Catholics were indeed living in the Midlands in large numbers, but they left no evidence of their actions behind them. There are also limitations in relying heavily on the *State Papers*, however. As a national archive, it is at times difficult to illuminate local events from the *State Papers*. Many of the specific sources analysed for this dissertation have been used comprehensively in the past for the history of recusancy at the national level.

Two other collections that have been useful for this dissertation were the Exchequer's Pipe Rolls and Recusant Rolls. Recusants began to be included in the Pipe Rolls in 1581, after a statute was implemented that made absence from reformed services punishable by a fine of £20 per lunar cycle. By 1592 these fines were moved to their own record series, the Recusant Rolls, where they remained until 1691. The Pipe Rolls and Recusant Rolls are arranged by county and only list those who have paid fines or forfeited property.<sup>58</sup> Curiously, examination of the rolls for the Midland counties has shown that members of gentry families were not entered *en masse*, even though they would have been the only ones wealthy enough to pay the fines. It is difficult to speculate whether these Catholics were too powerful in the local community to be fined, knew or bribed the Justices of the Peace, or managed to evade suspicion through means

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<sup>58</sup> W.B. Stephens, *Sources for English Local History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), p. 288.

such as church papism. It also seems that the very poor were excluded from the rolls, most likely because they could neither pay the fines nor forfeit any property. Here again, the record of the laity has been partially neglected. The rolls, therefore, concentrate on the members of the middle or upper reaches of the laity. Members of this social class would rarely have the means to pay the enormous fines, but they would likely have owned land that could be forfeited to the crown and then rented back to the recusant.

Churchwardens' accounts can be used as a tool to examine the popular culture and customs of a parish, whether reformed or persisting in some Catholic customs such as praying with beads, lighting candles and celebrating mass for deceased parishioners, the ringing of bells, the keeping of saint's days, or church decoration such as screens, roods or altars.<sup>59</sup> With such recorded evidence, historians can grapple with the meaning behind the frequency of such customs in order to shed light on the spread and practice of reformed church services and also where gaps remained for the facilitation of Catholic customs and habits.<sup>60</sup> Essentially, these accounts – which were not meant to be kept as records – can demonstrate the successes and failures of the Elizabethan Religious Settlement. However, major difficulties can arise when using churchwardens' accounts

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<sup>59</sup> Andrew Foster, 'Churchwardens' accounts of early modern England: some problems to note, but much to be gained', in Katherine L. French, Gary G. Gibbs and Beat A. Kümin (eds.) *The Parish in English Life, 1400-1600* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 74. See also Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 569 and Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 62.

<sup>60</sup> Foster, 'Churchwardens' accounts', pp. 75. See also Haigh, *English Reformations*, p. 245-247.

systematically; their survival rate is poor and they are often difficult to read, and indeed open to contradictory interpretations.<sup>61</sup>

Very few churchwardens' accounts have survived from the Midland parishes for any period of time during Elizabeth's reign.<sup>62</sup> (See Table 1.1)

Parish	Years of surviving accounts
<u>Herefordshire</u>	
Stoke Edith	1566-1570
St Nicholas, Hereford	1601-1607
<u>Northamptonshire</u>	
St John, Peterborough	1554-1573
Culworth	1531-1607 (impf.)
Norton by Daventry	1549-1580 (impf.)
Burton Latimer	1549-1580
<u>Staffordshire</u>	
Pattingham	1583-1646
St Peter	1589-1703 (impf.)
<u>Warwickshire</u>	
St Nicholas, Warwick	1547-1768
Rowington	1554-1589
Great Packington	1557-1631
Holy Trinity, Coventry	1559-1619
Kingsbury	1572-1587
Bideford	1582-1597

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<sup>61</sup> Foster, 'Churchwardens' accounts', p. 79. For example, Patrick Collinson wrote that while historians could gauge church commitment by its 'material remains' in pre-Reformation England, the same cannot be said for post-Reformation England. Patrick Collinson, 'The Elizabethan Church and the New Religion', in Christopher Haigh (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), p. 171. Diarmaid MacCulloch has a different view, and wrote that the 'building revolution' that happened in late sixteenth century churches is in fact evidence that English parishioners had re-committed: 'The Myth of the English Reformation', *Journal of British Studies* 30 (1991), p. 13.

<sup>62</sup> The data for this table is from Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*.



Southam	1582-1647 (impf.)
Shipston	1593-1617
<u>Worcestershire</u>	
Halesowen	1487-1582
Badsey	1525-1571
St Michael in Bedwardine	1543-1603
South Littleton	1548-1727

**Table 1.1** *Parishes with surviving churchwardens' accounts for Elizabethan Warwickshire.* (Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*, pp. 289-290.)

Churchwardens' accounts were also initially expected to shed light on Catholicism and recusancy in the Elizabethan Midlands. This aspiration was largely inspired by Eamon Duffy's book, *The Voices of Morebath*, which described in depth the religious change experienced in the village of Morebath through the churchwardens' accounts, recorded by the parish priest, Sir Christopher Trychay, on behalf of the churchwardens of the parish.<sup>63</sup> Many early modern churchwardens' accounts give details and inventories of pre-Reformation Catholic remnants. Depending on how the register was kept, the information could demonstrate what the parish believed as a whole, and how the community adapted to the Religious Settlement. Unfortunately, compelling information such as this is absent from Midland churchwardens' accounts.

Two printed primary sources that have been utilised in this dissertation are the autobiographies of John Gerard and William Weston, both translated by Philip Caraman. Gerard and Weston were Jesuit priests who operated covertly in

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<sup>63</sup> Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. xiii.

England, Gerard from 1588 until 1597, and Weston from 1584 until 1603.<sup>64</sup> The autobiographies offer intimate first-hand accounts of recusant circles, including those of the Midland counties. They detail how and to what extent recusant communities managed to keep a liturgical year. Both Gerard and Weston met regularly with Catholic prisoners while they themselves were incarcerated and they detailed the vibrant spirit of Catholicism within prison walls. Gerard and Weston also give particulars of recusant gentry families, the Catholic artefacts they kept and information on priest's holes within their homes. Gerard was forced to conceal himself in one of the priest's holes at Baddesley Clinton in Warwickshire while pursuivants searched the house. He gives an accurate description of the hide, but for the safety of his harbourers, does not name the house. These accounts have been supplemented by other Catholic books of the period, published largely by Catholics in exile, but occasionally by clandestine presses in England.

Part of the value of this thesis lies in its use of both documentary and non-traditional sources. Material sources, such as recusant houses and furnishings and the medieval architecture and remnants of parish churches, have been utilised where available and appropriate in this dissertation. The Elizabethan period saw the peak of Tudor vernacular architecture, but in fact most of the houses and churches involved actually pre-date the period. The usage of material sources was attempted for two principal reasons. First, the aim was to understand if, and if so how, the Catholics of the Midlands were able to refashion

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<sup>64</sup> Philip Caraman (trans.), *John Gerard: The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956); Caraman (trans.), *William Weston: The Autobiography of an Elizabethan* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1955).

their Catholic beliefs into something that could be in harmony with conformity. Second, how could medieval Catholic remnants have helped some in their obstinate recusancy? For example, priest's holes in gentry family homes were used both to harbour priests and hide prohibited Catholic books and artefacts. Pursuivants often found concealed books and artefacts such as missals, agni dei, transportable altar slabs, rosary beads, vestments and holy water.<sup>65</sup> This is an indication that while members of the Catholic community were officially barred from these Catholic objects, they managed to hide artefacts considered integral to the daily practice of the Catholic faith. Outside the recusant home, the Catholic community was often able to conceptualise traditional religion from paintings, statues and stained glass inside the parish church that had survived the Reformation.

#### 1.4 Conclusion

This study of the Midland counties will show that the story of the Catholic community in the region has both differences and similarities from other English counties and regions. There was no single national pattern; there were local factors that are not easily categorised into common denominators. The importance of local studies for understanding national events cannot be overemphasised. This dissertation will differ from the usual model of researching recusants in a particular shire by taking a regional approach, through the use of non-traditional sources, and also by aiming to include the culture of the whole community: clergy, gentry and non-gentry laity.

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<sup>65</sup> Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People*, p. 141.

The uniqueness of this study lies in the fact that no regional study of post-Reformation Catholicism has yet been attempted for the Midland counties. The usual model of recusancy research is to focus on the major external forces, such as how the Jesuits, seminary priests and government affected the development of recusancy in a particular county. This dissertation will differ from the usual model by taking a more grassroots and local approach, through the use of non-traditional sources, and also by aiming to include the culture of the whole community (clergy, gentry and laity) in order to understand how they were affected by local, not just national or foreign, factors. The research for this thesis has applied data from several areas connected to non-conformity – the local clergy, local government and monetary fines – to shed light on recusancy in the area with the goal of gaining knowledge of its identity, community and culture. Material and religious objects were important to early modern Catholicism to a degree that has changed over time, and this thesis therefore examines them.

The aim of this dissertation is to understand what Catholicism was to the people of the Elizabethan Midlands. Why were some willing to submit themselves to persecution, while others were not and conformed at some point during the reign? In some respects, it seems that Elizabethan Catholics were able to separate themselves from medieval Catholicism. They were anti-Tridentine in the sense that they were disconnected from ‘the papacy, purgatory, and popular devotions’, and the mass became the centre of devotion.<sup>66</sup> Others, for example the Throckmorton family of Coughton Court, were determined to keep a traditional liturgical year and remain loyal to ‘Roman’ Catholicism.<sup>67</sup> The reasons

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<sup>66</sup> Haigh, ‘Catholicism in Early Modern England’, p. 485.

<sup>67</sup> Marshall and Scott, ‘Introduction’, p. 30.

why some within the community adapted to changing times, while others remained stubbornly traditional will be explored throughout this dissertation.

## 2. The Elizabethan Midlands and the Problem of Catholicism

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Since post-Reformation Catholicism has so often been labelled 'seigneurial', it seemed apposite to examine the Midlands, an area famous for its recusant gentry on account of the Gunpowder Plot, and see how well the area accorded with the national model of recusancy, or at least with this theory of seigneurialism. In this way a regional study, which has largely fallen out of fashion, has great merit. The counties chosen to be included in this dissertation were connected through the Catholic networks of gentry families and also geographically. This background chapter aims to provide a narrative account of the main characters of this dissertation – the counties of the Midlands and the Catholic gentry families who resided in them.

With the question of patterns of recusancy comes the question of *why* some Catholics refused to conform either publicly or personally. There was certainly an element of fear for their souls if they turned their backs on the Catholic Church, but there is also much evidence that some individual communities could remain comfortable with their familiar and traditional devotions. In a time when religious obedience was state enforced, those who refused to conform likely did so not because of personal choice but because they were subscribing to a higher authority than the monarch. There was also a pragmatic side for the continuation of Catholicism; the Latin missals were paid for, the church decorations were hallowed by time and the parishioners were familiar with the teachings of the Catholic Church.

The difficulty in grassroots conversion to Protestantism was that many people were unwilling to turn their backs on traditional religion and the life to which were accustomed, not necessarily that they refused to relinquish Catholic doctrine, though this certainly was the case for some obstinate recusants in the Midlands. Pockets of Catholicism remained in the areas around gentry family homes and because of this non-parochial Catholic communities were created and sustained. Here Catholic doctrine and rites could be observed when priests were available. What is remarkable about some areas in the Midlands is that groups of Catholics were able to maintain themselves even when isolated from gentry families.

In Warwickshire, recusancy was strongest in the west of the county, where the estates of the Throckmortons, Smyths and Sheldons gave support to Catholics. The parishes with the highest number of recusants recorded in a 1592 commissioners' report were Solihull and Knowle, with twenty-seven recusants between the two parishes; Tanworth-in-Arden with twenty-six recusants, and Rowington with twenty-one.<sup>1</sup> While Rowington had the influence of the non-gentry Catholic Skinner family, there were no prominent Catholic gentry in the other parishes mentioned. On similar lines, Wendy Brogden's research has found that lay commitment to Catholicism in Herefordshire was not dependant on seigneurialism.<sup>2</sup>

In Northamptonshire, the presence of the Vaux family of Harrowden seems to have encouraged Catholicism in the parish, with yeoman farmers being recorded in the Pipe and Recusant Rolls, including Anthony Carrington, Henry

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<sup>1</sup> SP 12/243, f.202, Book containing the second certificates of the Commissioners for the county of Warwick to the Council, November [?] 1592.

<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to Wendy Brogden for this information.

Tuke and the 'spinster' Agnes Pratt.<sup>3</sup> Five recusants were recorded on the same roll in the parish of Irthingborough, which is very close to Harrowden, and so may also have been influenced by the Vaux family.<sup>4</sup> No recusants were recorded in Deene, home of the Brudenell family. Otherwise, recorded recusants are scattered around the county's parishes, and not recorded in parishes that were home to minor Northamptonshire gentry, such as the Coberford family in Watford, the Marriatt family in Arthingworth and the Roydon family in Gretton.<sup>5</sup>

In the Leicestershire Pipe Rolls, the majority of recusants were recorded in the parish of Ashby Magna, which was not home to a Catholic gentry family, but curiously, these recusants were left out of the Recusant Rolls altogether.<sup>6</sup> The yeoman farmer John Gretton was recorded in 1589 in Gracedieu, parish of the prominent Beaumont family.<sup>7</sup> Staffordshire is different in that pockets of Catholics were found within the parishes of influential Catholic gentry, as well as independently in parishes without a prominent Catholic family. Bishop Bentham made a return of recusants within Staffordshire to the Privy Council in February 1578, and Catholics were included in the parishes with the eight most influential gentry families; Hamstall Ridware, home of the Fitzherbert family, had the highest number of Catholics, followed by Swynnerton, home of Francis Gatacre.<sup>8</sup> The parishes of Draycott-in-the-Moors, home of John Draycott; Brewood, home

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<sup>3</sup> Hugh Bowler and T.J. McCann (eds.). *Recusants in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls 1581-1592*, Catholic Record Society Record Series 71 (London: Catholic Record Society, 1986), pp. 34, 138, 177.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40, 117, 146.

<sup>6</sup> See Hugh Bowler, *Recusant Roll 2, 1593-4*, Catholic Record Society, Records Series vol. 57, 1965; Hugh Bowler, *Recusant Rolls 3 and 4, 1594-6*, Catholic Record Society, Record Series vol. 61, 1970.

<sup>7</sup> Bowler and McCann, *Recusants in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls 1581-1592*, p. 72.

<sup>8</sup> Staffordshire Historical Collections, 1915, pp. 373-5.



of John Gifford; Wolesley, home of Erasmus Wolesley; St Thomas, home of Brian Fowler; Eccleshall, home of Thomas Peshall; and Sandon, home of Hugh Erdiswick, all had recorded lay Catholics along with these prominent heads of families. Besides these parishes, there was a wider distribution of lay Catholics that was not completely dependent on gentry families.<sup>9</sup> Worcestershire seems to be the exception, with large numbers of lay-Catholics residing in parishes with direct gentry support, such as King's Norton, home of the Middlemores; Hindlip, home of the Abingtons; and Chaddesley, home of the Packingtons; but few if any lay Catholics outside of these areas.<sup>10</sup>

From this it seems that the behaviours of Midland Catholics had meaning. Whether they decided to engage in full conversion to Protestantism, outward conversion, yet remaining Catholic at heart, or full-blown, stubborn recusancy, or whether they moved back and forth between these options, all these actions must be considered, since a covert prayer is as worthy as an exposed one in indicating Catholic loyalties. As Lawrence Stone argued, 'Many historians now believe that the culture of the group, and even the will of the individual, are potentially at least as important causal agents of change as the impersonal forces of material output and demographic growth.'<sup>11</sup> In other words, individual actions have their own unique value.

This study of the Midlands will show that the story of the Catholic community in the region both differed from and resembled other English

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Vincent Burke, *Catholic Recusants in Elizabethan Worcestershire*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis: The University of Birmingham (1972), p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Lawrence Stone, 'The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History,' in John Tosh (ed.), *Historians on History* (Harlow, Pearson Education, 2000), p. 256.

counties and regions. There was no single national pattern, but regional factors that are not easily categorised into common denominators. The importance of regional studies to understanding national events cannot be overemphasised. This dissertation will differ from the usual model of researching recusants in a particular shire by taking a regional approach that aims to include the culture of the whole community: clergy, gentry and non-gentry laity, and also through the use of material culture where available. It is difficult in many ways to ascribe this study to the genre of local history, and the region may be too expansive and varied to offer the narrow focus that a local study should. A regionalised study of the Midlands will necessarily involve several local studies, but the interest here is in the value of comparison, to understand if there is a typical model of Catholicism in the Midlands, or if the micro stories are simply too different from one another to be generalised. This dissertation aims to demonstrate that Catholics were not associated with one dominant community, as John Bossy proposed. It is difficult to categorise all Catholics and recusants into one 'community', and indeed historians would not attempt such an arrangement for any other early modern group.

Even if Elizabethan Catholics were unanimous in their ideological convictions, for example if they homogeneously chose to adhere to the teachings of the Council of Trent (which in themselves are not always easily summarised), imbalances in social status, political convictions, geographical placing and economic wealth inhibits one from categorising them into a single community. In this light, examining the smaller communities and networks of Catholics is a more worthwhile survey. The study of Catholicism in the Midlands is especially engaging due to a combination of factors that made the circumstances of its

survival so extraordinary. The influence of Catholic gentry families, an influx of seminary priests and Jesuits, the surviving Marian priests, a Catholic laity and often sympathetic local government alongside to the staunchly Protestant bishops appointed by Elizabeth in 1559 make for a curiously variegated region.

In the Midlands, Catholics and missionary priests often found support in the gentry families of the counties, though as mentioned above, their influence was not essential to the survival of rural Catholicism. These gentry families were often connected with other Midland counties apart from those that hosted their main family branch, through marriage and kinship lines and from ownership of various properties in neighbouring counties. The main line of Catholic gentry families in Worcestershire were the Packingtons of Harvington Hall, the Habingtons of Hindlip Hall, and the Wintours of Huddington Court. In Warwickshire there were the Throckmortons of Coughton Court, the Ferrers of Baddesley Clinton, the Grants of Norbrook, and the Sheldons who had a cadet home in Long Compton. The Lyttletons of Holbeach House lived in Staffordshire; in the same county were the Fuljams of Throwley Hall, where Edmund Campion spent a night in 1581.<sup>12</sup> Northamptonshire was the seat of the Catholic Lord Vaux at Harrowden Hall, the Catesbys at Ashby St Ledgers, the Treshams of Rushton Hall, and the Brudenells at Deene. The Fitzherbert family, under its patriarch Sir Thomas, had homes in Norbury, Derbyshire, Mevesyn Ridware, Staffordshire, and Edgbaston, Warwickshire. Prominent Catholic families in Leicestershire included the Beaumonts of Gracedieu, the Digbys of Tilton, the Caves of Rothley and Barcheston in Warwickshire, and the Shirleys of Staunton Harold. It has

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Hodgetts, 'Campion in Staffordshire and Derbyshire', *Midland Catholic History*, vii (2000), p. 52.

been previously supposed that the survival of Catholicism would have been impossible without gentry houses that acted as covert mass centres, but this does not seem entirely true for the Midlands, or perhaps this theory for England overall requires re-examination.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the conservative nature of county inhabitants found an outlet in the old religion and in semi-feudal fidelity to the local Catholic gentry families, and these segregated communities provided a refuge where the clergy were able to find security.<sup>14</sup> However, Catholicism also survived in parishes where no gentry families resided and therefore the influence of missionary priests was not directly felt, as previously mentioned. Various methods of adaptation and innovation were practiced, and these will be discussed in detail in chapter 5.

## 2.1 Geography

This section will consider Catholicism and the development of recusancy in the Midlands from the angle of geography and political and ecclesiastical jurisdictions. It argues that the unique and natural features of the area had beneficial repercussions on the Catholic community. This view differs from much past research on Elizabethan Catholicism, especially those studies focusing on the national level. The situation in the Midlands suggests that the force of the Elizabethan Religious Settlement was not in itself sufficient to eradicate Catholicism; there were other factors such as parish clergy, gentry families, communal and individual resistance and even matters as simple as geography

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<sup>13</sup> John Bossy, 'The Character of Elizabethan Catholicism', *Past and Present* 21 (1962), p. 39.

<sup>14</sup> J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1984), p. 149.

and landscape that impacted the survival of Catholicism. Here is an appropriate place to discuss briefly the geographical context of the counties most considered in this dissertation: Herefordshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire. These counties were chosen for their geographical merit and networking connections, with the latter discussed in chapter 3. Traditionally considered to be part of the Midlands but not included in this study are Shropshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Rutland and Lincolnshire. Research suggested a strong relationship among Catholic families and clergy among the Midland counties considered in this study, and this is why they were chosen.

Herefordshire, the most westerly of the Midland counties, bordered on the east with Worcestershire and Gloucestershire, and on the south with Monmouthshire, and was approximately 840 square miles in extent.<sup>15</sup> William Camden called the county 'right pleasant', and recorded that the land was fertile and fruitful, especially in wheat and corn.<sup>16</sup> Notable rivers included the Wye, Lug and Munow, which met together and passed into the Severn Sea. The county was naturally divided into two regions, the Wye valley to the south of Hereford, and the Malvern hills to the east of the county, bordering with Worcestershire. In the 1560s, twenty-one members of the city council of Hereford were recorded as Catholic, ten as neutral and none as Protestant.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The hundred of Dacorum: Introduction,' in *A History of the County of Hertford: Volume 2*, ed. William Page (London: Victoria County History, 1908), pp. 141-142, accessed May 6, 2015, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/herts/vol2/pp141-142>.

<sup>16</sup> William Camden, *Britannia, or a Chronological Description of Great Britain, Ireland and the Adjacent Islands*, rev. by Edmund Gibson (1722), p. 685.

<sup>17</sup> Alan D. Dyer, *The City of Worcester in the sixteenth century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1973), p. 238.

Elizabethan Staffordshire, a large county at about 1220 square miles, consisted of wild moorlands in the far north of the county, with the south of the county rolling hills, and the land in the middle is undulating.<sup>18</sup> There were sixteen market towns and 180 parishes, all within the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield.<sup>19</sup> The main rivers were the Stour and the Trent. Major Catholic families included the Fitzherberts of Hamstall Ridware, the Gatacres of Swynnterton and Thomas, third Lord Paget, who resided in Burton Abbey.

Worcestershire in the west Midlands bordered on Herefordshire to the south-east, Staffordshire to the north and Warwickshire to the north-west and west. In the sixteenth century the land was characterised by the valleys of the Severn and Avon rivers. The higher lands which edged onto the valleys were hills and farmlands. The south of the county consisted of woodlands, such as the Vale of Evesham, to the west the Malvern Hills.<sup>20</sup> Elizabethan Worcestershire was overwhelmingly rural, and no town had economic or political supremacy over the encompassing bucolic lands.<sup>21</sup> The city of Worcester, unlike other Midland county cities such as Hereford and Warwick, had no significant recusant population, suggesting that recusancy was a rural occurrence in Worcestershire and dependent on the county estates of gentry families.<sup>22</sup> Notable Catholic families in the county were the Middlemores at King's Norton, the Packingtons at

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<sup>18</sup> A.P. Baggs, M.F. Cleverdon, D.A. Johnston and N.J. Tringham, 'Alstonefield: Introduction,' in *A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 7, Leek and the Moorlands*, ed. C R J Currie and M W Greenslade (London: Victoria County History, 1996), pp. 1-8, accessed May 7, 2015, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/staffs/vol7/pp1-8>.

<sup>19</sup> Sampson Erdeswick, *A Survey of Staffordshire; containing the antiquities of that county* (London: J.B. Nicholas and Son, 1844), p. v.

<sup>20</sup> Dyer, *The City of Worcester*, pp. 13-15.

<sup>21</sup> Burke, *Catholic Recusants in Elizabethan Worcestershire*, p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Chaddesley, and the Abingtons at Hindlip (where the Jesuit Edward Oldcorn was harboured by Thomas Abington), which is geographically close to Baddesley Clinton, Warwickshire.<sup>23</sup> The Throckmorton family also had a Worcestershire estate at Feckenham, five miles from Coughton Court.<sup>24</sup>

The principal Catholic families of Warwickshire were geographically dispersed across the county, though the Arden Forest saw a denser population than the rest of the Feldon region of the county. The bishop's report to the Privy Council in 1564 revealed that seven Catholics were city councillors of Warwick, while only one was Protestant.<sup>25</sup> A commissioners' report for the county in 1592 showed recusants in all four hundreds of the county, though the majority were in the hundreds of Hemlingford and Barlichway, both of which were predominantly in the Arden, where the majority of the Catholic gentry resided on account of the protection the geography provided.<sup>26</sup> The main branch of the Throckmorton family's estate of Coughton Court was on the edge of the county, bordering Worcestershire. A cadet branch of the family lived in the parish of Solihull, in the north of the Arden, and close to the Ferrers family at Baddesley Clinton, the Middlemore estate at Edgebaston, and the Catesby family at Lapworth.<sup>27</sup>

Early modern Leicestershire was approximately 890 square miles of agricultural land, rich meadow and the Soar River.<sup>28</sup> There were two forest

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<sup>23</sup> Thomas M. McCoog, *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England, 1589-1597: Building the Faith of Saint Peter Upon the King of Spain's Monarchy* (Farnham, Ashgate: 2012), p. 35.

<sup>24</sup> Cogan, 'Catholic Gentry, Family Networks and Patronage', pp. 42-43.

<sup>25</sup> Dyer, *The City of Worcester*, p. 238.

<sup>26</sup> SP 12/234, f. 202, Book containing the second certificates of the Commissioners for the county of Warwick to the Council, November [?] 1592.

<sup>27</sup> Cogan, 'Catholic Gentry, Family Networks and Patronage', pp. 42-43.

<sup>28</sup> 'The City of Leicester: Political and administrative history, 1509-1660,' in *A History of the County of Leicester: Volume 4, the City of Leicester*, ed. R A

regions, the Charnwood Forest to the north-west of the county, and the Leicester Forest, which lay west of the city of Leicester.<sup>29</sup> The leading Catholic families of Leicestershire were situated geographically close to one another, grouped mostly in the north-west of the county, in the Charnwood Forest area. This is significant in the same way as the Arden Forest; the geography offered Catholics protection, and cradled traditional communities and local government. The Beaumont family home of Gracedieu near Thringstone, named after the thirteenth-century Grace Dieu Priory of Augustinian nuns, was about six miles distant from the Shirley family home of Staunton Harold and the Palmers of Kegworth.<sup>30</sup> The Vaux family, whose principal seat was Harrowden, Northamptonshire, owned the estates of Great Ashby and Little Ashby in the south-west of Leicestershire, which were set geographically apart from those previously mentioned. Similarly, the Brokesby family's seat at Shoby, near the market town of Melton Mowbray, was also isolated, though the Vaux and Brokesby families were connected by friendship and marriage.<sup>31</sup>

Early modern Northamptonshire, like Leicestershire, was an agricultural county of meadow and river valleys, such as those around the Nene and Ise

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McKinley (London: Victoria County History, 1958), pp. 55-75, accessed May 8, 2015, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/leics/vol4/pp55-75>.

<sup>29</sup> Charles Fox-Strangeways and Arthur Reginal Horwood, *The Geology of the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield* (London: Wyman and Sons for His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1907), p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> Susan Cogan has estimated these distances based on county maps such as Christopher Saxon's, in her PhD dissertation, 'Catholic Gentry, Family Networks and Patronage in the English Midlands, c. 1570-1630', University of Colorado (2012), p. 36.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.



rivers.<sup>32</sup> Unlike Leicestershire, however, in Northamptonshire the prominent Catholic families were not closely clustered together. Interestingly, some of these family homes were in close proximity to prominent Protestant or Calvinist families. Within Rockingham Forest were the seats of the Catholic Brudenells at Deene, the Treshams at Rushton and Lyveden, the Watsons of Rockingham Castle, and the Griffins at Dingly and Braybrook, and also the Protestant Mildmays at Apethorp, the Montagus at Boughton, and Sir Christopher Hatton's home at Kirby.<sup>33</sup> The Vaux family estate of Harrowden was about seven miles from the Treshams at Rushton, and these two families were the county's leading Catholics, connected by friendship, kin and marriage.<sup>34</sup> The Catesby estate of Ashby St Legers was in the west of the county, near the border of Warwickshire.<sup>35</sup>

A regionalised view of Catholicism and recusancy such as this study demonstrates that geography factored into the pattern of religious conformity. The Midland counties were just far enough away from London to make reporting back and forth between the local authorities and bishops and the queen and Privy Council in London difficult enough that the central government could not gain full control over local areas. All the Midland counties were primarily rural and were therefore greatly influenced socially, politically and economically by the gentry families of the area. The conditions of this melting pot allowed Catholics to survive.

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36; Willian Camden, *Britiannia* (1610), p. 505' I.B. Terrett, 'Northamptonshire', in *The Domesday Geography of Midland England*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 408.

<sup>33</sup> Cogan, 'Catholic Gentry, Family Networks and Patronage', p. 39.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39; BL Royal MS D iii. ff. 41v, 42r, 43v, 44r.

<sup>35</sup> Cogan, 'Catholic Gentry, Family Networks and Patronage', p. 39.

## 2.2 Local Government

The local government of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England was powerful, yet not necessarily consistent between or even within regions. Various specifics influenced a county's rule and authority, including the sway of prominent families, whether Catholic or Protestant; where they were positioned geographically; diocesan and parish boundaries; and the character and convictions of the clergy.<sup>36</sup> The counties examined in this dissertation had common borders, either directly or indirectly; local and ecclesiastical government in general resembled one another, all which were under the agency of gentry families, including Catholics.<sup>37</sup>

Several layers of supervision that reported to the Privy Council either directly or indirectly governed the Midlands, but the region was not at the forefront of national politics. Nor was the influence of Catholics and recusants seen as such a threat in the eyes of the queen and Privy Council as areas in the north of England, such as Lancashire and Yorkshire. A number of influential gentry families in the Midlands were Catholic and conservative, and these families exercised much influence within the region, especially in the rural areas.<sup>38</sup> Within Elizabethan society there was a clear relationship between the magisterial office and social status; the gentry made sure to secure local government positions and promotions to augment their own status, while

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43; Steve Hindle, 'County Governance in England', in Robert Tittler and Norman Jones (ed.), *A Companion to Tudor Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 99.

<sup>37</sup> Cogan, 'Catholic Gentry, Family Networks and Patronage', p. 44.

<sup>38</sup> S.T. Bindoff, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1509-1558 Vol. 1*, (London: Secker and Warburg for the History of Parliament Trust, 1982), p. 210.

simultaneously excluding their rivals.<sup>39</sup> Early in Elizabeth's reign, Catholics continued to keep their place in local offices; for example, Thomas Tresham of Rushton, Northamptonshire, was appointed sheriff of the county in 1573, and was knighted by the queen in 1575.<sup>40</sup> Ralph Sheldon of Beoley Worcestershire was appointed justice of the peace in 1574 and sheriff for 1576-1577.<sup>41</sup> The situation began to change in the late 1570s, however, with local offices becoming more difficult for Catholics to attain. The fact that gentlemen would use their local offices and authority to expand their own economic, political or religious interests was not lost on Elizabeth and her government, a prospect they found particularly worrisome.<sup>42</sup> Gentry families in the Midlands were very influential due to the rural location of the counties where they served as members of parliament, justices of the peace and sheriffs, positions that were in some cases granted to Catholics. Compounding such anxieties, Edward Arden was sheriff of Warwickshire in 1575 and Thomas Throckmorton of Coughton Court, Warwickshire a justice of the peace and sheriff in 1560 and 1587, was knighted in 1587 and then represented Gloucestershire in the 1589 parliament.<sup>43</sup> Gentry families had an authentic influence in the rural areas, but their impact was less

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<sup>39</sup> Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales* (London: Macmillan, 1994), p. 170.

<sup>40</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England – Northamptonshire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 398.

<sup>41</sup> BL Lansdown 56, f. 168. seq. This is discussed in further detail in chapter 7.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 175-176.

<sup>43</sup> William Wizeman, 'Arden, Edward (1533–1583)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.eproxy1.lib.hku.hk/view/article/633>, accessed 11 May 2015 14 Aug 2013]; Jan Broadway, 'Throckmorton family (per. c.1500–1682)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.eproxy1.lib.hku.hk/view/article/72341>, accessed 11 May 2015 14 Aug 2013].

potent in the towns, such as Coventry and Worcester, perhaps because urban centres were influenced more by national politics.<sup>44</sup>

The system of local government in the Tudor period was a network of informal connections and agreements. This remnant of medievalism continued because the community had its own organic structure that would often be the force of action; that is, those at the top of the social hierarchy naturally demanded deference from those lower on the social scale, even though all had the same responsibilities to 'king and council'.<sup>45</sup> There were many levels of local government in the sixteenth century: 'truly local courts, royal officials appointed in the localities, and local men commissioned by the crown for the purpose of government.'<sup>46</sup> The influence of the local courts had been significantly curtailed by this period, however, for they now dealt with only a few criminal cases and also the 'economic administration of the manor.'<sup>47</sup> The number of appointed royal officials actually increased during this period. In addition to the 'old shire trinity' of sheriff, escheator and coroner were the lords lieutenant and their deputies, the receivers of royal revenue, the feodaries of the Court and Wards and customers and their underlings.<sup>48</sup>

These officers were appointed by the monarch, but the local gentlemen who were commissioned to implement the desires of the central government held real influence over sixteenth century communities.<sup>49</sup> The most important local government positions in this period were the justices of the peace,

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<sup>44</sup> Bindoff, *The House of Commons*, p. 210.

<sup>45</sup> Geoffrey Elton, *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 462.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 463.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

appointed every year in most shires, which was apparently the case with the Midland counties, with many names frequently recurring on the lists.<sup>50</sup> They were often members of the gentry, as the position was unpaid.<sup>51</sup> In 1562, four years after Elizabeth's accession, there were sixteen justices in Warwickshire.<sup>52</sup> Near the end of Elizabeth's reign, however, Warwickshire saw a significant increase in the number of justices of the peace; there were forty-one in 1594, thirty-seven in 1595, thirty-eight in 1598 and thirty-seven in 1599.<sup>53</sup> This was true of other Midland counties; in 1562 there were thirty-six justices in Gloucestershire; twenty-four in Herefordshire; twenty-four in Leicestershire; twenty-nine in Northamptonshire; nineteen in Staffordshire; and twenty-nine in Worcestershire.<sup>54</sup> Later in the reign the number of justices in Gloucestershire rose to sixty-nine; Herefordshire to forty-four; Leicestershire to twenty-seven; Northamptonshire to forty-nine; Staffordshire to thirty-six; and Worcestershire to forty-four.<sup>55</sup> Commissions were still rising in number at the end of Elizabeth's reign. Gloucestershire had fifty-eight justices of the peace in 1602; Herefordshire had fifty-one; Leicestershire had twenty-six; Northamptonshire had fifty-one; Staffordshire had thirty-eight; and Worcestershire had fifty-one.<sup>56</sup>

Commissions and certain statutes (often pertaining to recusancy) were the sources for the augmented powers of justices of the peace; who were

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<sup>50</sup> Penry Williams, *The Later Tudors: England 1547-1603* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 152.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales*, p. 167.

<sup>53</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls: Elizabeth*, vols 36 (1013), 37 (777), 40 (514), 41 (75).

<sup>54</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Elizabeth*, vol. II 1560-1563 (London: HM Stationary Office, 1948), pp. 437, 438, 439, 440, 441-442, 444.

<sup>55</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls: Elizabeth*, vol 36 (987), (990), (995), (997), (1004), (1012).

<sup>56</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls: Elizabeth*, vol 44 (1249), (1253), (1257), (1258), (1264), (1276).

authorised to enforce the peace and to 'enquire by jury into stated offences', such as recusancy.<sup>57</sup> Vincent Burke has argued that the justices of the peace for Worcestershire were largely ineffective in enforcing of conformity, due to their own inaction. The gentry families, both Catholic and Protestant, of the county would have been linked by friendship, kin and marriage, and may have been more likely to protect each other's interests than those of the bishop, regardless of religious convictions.<sup>58</sup> Catholics were justices of the peace early in Elizabeth's reign and still wielded power. All the while, the local and national government were inefficient in eradicating Catholicism.

### *2.3 Ecclesiastical Government*

The Midlands were divided among several bishops for ecclesiastical administration; Worcester, Gloucester, Coventry and Lichfield, Oxford (though this seat was vacant for much of Elizabeth's reign, between 1559-1567, and 1568-1589), Peterborough and Lincoln. The main official tool for enforcing episcopal authority was the hierarchy of church courts. Elizabethan church courts were the bureaucratic tools for ensuring moral and religious conformity and regulation. They strove to monitor moral behaviour and actions, enforced codes of conduct, and tried to resolve disputes within the community.<sup>59</sup> Church courts had existed in medieval England, but their post-Reformation counterparts were rather different. After the break with Rome, the church courts were confused as to what canon law actually was, so a law based 'partly on the old

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<sup>57</sup> Elton, *The Tudor Constitution*, p. 465.

<sup>58</sup> Burke, 'Catholic Recusants in Elizabethan Worcestershire', p. 69.

<sup>59</sup> Susan Doran and Christopher Durston, *Princes, Pastors and People: The Church and Religion in England, 1500-1700* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, London: Routledge, 1991), p. 188.

canons and partly on statute was used.<sup>60</sup> Likewise, the church courts were no longer independent of the state, since the monarch was Supreme Governor of the church.<sup>61</sup>

The lowest level in the hierarchy of church courts was the archdeacon's court.<sup>62</sup> The archdeacons usually took their courts to each parish within their jurisdictions twice a year on what were called visitations, but these were not always carried out as often as required. Above the archdeacon's court was the consistory, or bishop's court, that represented the jurisdiction of the diocese.<sup>63</sup> The bishops were also supposed to make visitations within their dioceses in order to ensure that ecclesiastical policies were upheld, and, unlike the archdeacons, bishops had the power to excommunicate parishioners and suspend officials.<sup>64</sup> Above the consistory courts there was the provincial organisation of archbishop's courts of Canterbury and York.<sup>65</sup> However, these courts lacked the power to enforce civil law so they were not an efficient means of promoting conformity within the English church. The point here is that the Midlands was a patchwork of ecclesiastical jurisdictions.

Running parallel to the ordinary church courts were the courts of the High Commission, which were special courts, created in the reign of Elizabeth.<sup>66</sup> The High Commission was created in order to solve the problem of inefficient church courts by granting ecclesiastical commissions to both laymen and clerics

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<sup>60</sup> Elton, *The Tudor Constitution*, p. 218.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Arthur F. Kinney and David W. Swain (eds.), *Tudor England: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publications, 2001), p. 164.

<sup>65</sup> Elton, *The Tudor Constitution*, p. 220.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221.

to exercise a stricter jurisdiction. These courts existed permanently for the ecclesiastical provinces and as needed in particular dioceses, though the provincial and diocesan courts acted independently of each other. There was no sequence of appeals between them, nor did they have any connection to the ordinary courts.<sup>67</sup> These courts were meant to reinforce the power of the bishops and archbishops, so that they themselves could overstep the technicalities of the ordinary ecclesiastical courts for cases of religious defiance. They have been described by Geoffrey Elton and others as the church's criminal courts.<sup>68</sup> The High Commission employed the same procedures as the ordinary courts, but added the requirements of swearing oaths and cautionary imprisonment.<sup>69</sup> These courts could impose such penalties on offenders as fines and arrests, and combined with recusancy commissions, they were more effective against Catholicism than the Church Courts. However, by bringing laymen into the government of the church, these commissions inevitably limited the authority of the bishops.<sup>70</sup>

The ordinary church courts and High Commissions were the government's first line of defence against Catholic recusancy in England.<sup>71</sup> The proceedings of the courts reveal Catholic resistance against the Religious Settlement and later the statutes, mostly through charges of recusancy and refusal to take communion at reformed services. Even so, the courts were inadequate in terms of enforcing conformity largely because many officials, especially the archdeacons, were sympathetic, considerate and sensitive towards

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 221, 222.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>70</sup> Williams, *The Later Tudors*, p. 463.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 466.



the Catholic plight. The courts were overburdened with various national matters, and when recusancy cases came to the table, the offenders often received light sentences. Attempts by the courts to suppress non-conformity may have been ineffective in part because they were too impersonal, in that those who were meant to enforce the regulations had no intimate knowledge of who the recusants of the Midlands were, nor where they lived.

#### *2.4 The Parish*

From the 1530s to the 1830s the parish was the basic unit of civil local government, and an authentic degree of self-government existed at the parochial level. It was not only a jurisdiction for worship, but also a communal structure of collective social behaviour.<sup>72</sup> Social services such as poor relief, celebrations and the collection of taxes were prepared and practiced within the parish, along with religious worship. The parish was a basic territorial boundary and the parochial system was a complex structure incorporating the spiritual hierarchy as well as lay officers. Its function was not merely ecclesiastical, but also social. The parish priest was the principal ecclesiastical authority, and he exercised real spiritual authority.

The principal lay officers of the parish were the churchwardens. The parishioners chose two churchwardens annually, and the wardens presented their accounts to the community once a year, usually at Easter. The role was voluntary and incurred so many duties that it was often too much for two people

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<sup>72</sup> Katherine L. French, Gary G. Gibbs and Beat Kümin, 'Introduction,' in Katherine L. French, Gary G. Gibbs and Beat Kümin (eds.), *The Parish in English Life 1400-1600* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 3.

to perform capably.<sup>73</sup> There is little evidence of a salary for wardens, but it is reasonable to suspect that they received something for their services from the parishioners themselves; indeed, churchwardens are occasionally mentioned in wills.<sup>74</sup> The churchwardens administered early recusancy fines, but in all probability the most burdensome and unpleasant task for the churchwarden was the mandatory appearance before the archdeacons' court, where they were required to answer questions about the faith and morals of their fellow parishioners.<sup>75</sup> This would have been no easy task, and churchwardens may have felt sincere resentment at being expected to betray the confidence of the people with whom they shared a community, to the archdeacon, a man whose very office segregated him from the community.

As previously mentioned, churchwardens kept accounts that were presented to the parishioners once a year, and those that do survive provide a window to scrutinise the customs and popular culture of the parish.<sup>76</sup> It is likely that these accounts were kept in almost every parish, but their survival rate is low because they were not meant to be permanent records, and therefore churchwardens were not obliged to record them in parchment books (such as the parish registers) and once they had been audited and accepted by the parishioners they were often discarded. Therefore, most of the surviving records account for a small or random number of years.<sup>77</sup> In some instances, the

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>76</sup> Andrew Foster, 'Churchwardens' Accounts of Early Modern England and Wales: Some Problems to Note, but Much to be Gained,' in French et al., *The Parish in English Life*, p. 71. Please see Appendix 1 for a list of surviving Midland churchwardens' accounts.

<sup>77</sup> Pounds, *A History of the English Parish*, p. 231.

accounts yield details of the restoration of churches and the dismantling (and the reintroduction) of pieces of furniture or religious artefacts such as altars, rood screens, candles, vestments and statues.<sup>78</sup> Because of the nature of the accounts, systematic analysis of them has allowed historians to understand the successes and failures of the Protestant Reformation and the survival of Catholic customs in some parishes.<sup>79</sup> Unfortunately, this is not the case for the Midlands.

This was the system of the early modern English parish, made up of the spiritual hierarchy, lay officers and, of course, the parishioners. In England the Reformation was important not only in changing the nature and structure of religion, but in augmenting the power of the state.<sup>80</sup> However, the Reformation seems to have impacted the structure and role of the parish very little, and it continued in much along the same fashion that it had for centuries, with offices added or dropped as needed to meet the economic and demographic changes of the times.<sup>81</sup>

## *2.5 The Clergy*

The clergy in the Elizabethan Midlands can be classified into three groups: the secular clergy of the reformed national church; the remaining Marian priests; and the eventual influx of seminary priests and Jesuits. The conglomeration of these three types of clergy is not necessarily unique to this region, but the situation deserves attention because of the polarity between the types of clergy who worked in the county. The queen chose convinced Protestants as bishops

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<sup>78</sup> Foster, 'Churchwardens' Accounts of Early Modern England', p. 74.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>80</sup> Pounds, *A History of the English Parish*, p. 364.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365.

for all dioceses, though by no means all of these could be described as dependable in their efforts to suppress recusancy, not because they were sympathetic to conservative religion, but because they were inept at the task. In contrast to the bishops, the people of the Midlands tended to lean towards Catholicism, certainly during the early decades of Elizabeth's reign. Feelings of popular anti-Catholicism in the Midlands were not noticeable until at least a generation into Elizabeth's reign; therefore the community was able to remain relatively unsuppressed by their Protestant neighbours.<sup>82</sup> The Elizabethan dioceses encompassing the Midland counties were Coventry and Lichfield with Thomas Bentham (1560-1579) and William Overton (1580-1609) as bishops; Hereford, with John Scory (1559-1585) and Herbert Westfaling (1585-1602) as bishops; Peterborough, with Edmund Scambler (1560-1584), Richard Howland (1585-1600) and Thomas Dove (1601-1630) as bishops; Worcester with Edwin Sandys (1559-1570), Nicholas Bullingham (1571-1576), John Whitgift (1577-1583), Edmund Freke (1584-1591), Richard Fletcher (1593-1595), Thomas Bilson (1596-1597) and Gervase Babington (1597-1610) as bishops; and Lincoln with Nicholas Bullingham (1560-1571), Thomas Cooper (1571-1584), William Wickham (1584-1595), and William Chaderton (1595-1608) as bishops.

Edwin Sandys was consecrated as Worcester's first Elizabethan bishop in December 1559, over a year after the queen came to the throne.<sup>83</sup> He had acted as the queen's chaplain since his return from exile in Zurich, and his close proximity to the queen may have been influential in his nomination as bishop. He also had a substantial role in the formulation of the new Book of Common

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<sup>82</sup> Marshall, *Reformation England*, p. 144.

<sup>83</sup> Patrick Collinson, 'Sandys, Edwin (1519(?)–1588)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 48 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 917.

Prayer.<sup>84</sup> Elizabeth and her council seem to have given episcopal appointments to men who shared in the motivations that had been present at the formulation of the Religious Settlement – or were at least thought to possess these qualities – such as attentiveness to the parish and parishioners, and flexibility.<sup>85</sup> It is possible that some of the bishops only subscribed to this behaviour because they believed it to be temporary. The bishops eventually became impatient that the Religious Settlement was not being strictly and immediately enforced, and Edwin Sandys as bishop of Worcester even criticised the queen for keeping a cross and candles in her chapel, nearly costing him his see.<sup>86</sup>

Sandys, who held the see of Worcester until 1570, was to prove less than biddable. Sandys was among the more radical of bishops and therefore it is peculiar that he was the choice of a queen who regarded radical religion with distaste, or at least wariness. News of the severity with which Sandys held his first visitation of the diocese of Worcester made its way to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker, whose reprimand of Sandys likely mirrored the feelings of the queen and her Council.<sup>87</sup> The archbishop chided Sandys for holding a visitation so early in his tenure as bishop – before parishioners had sufficient time to come to terms, both mentally and materially, with the Religious Settlement – and for the harshness he displayed towards the parishioners.

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<sup>84</sup> Patrick Collinson, 'Sandys, Edwin (1519?–1588)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.eproxy2.lib.hku.hk/view/article/24649>, accessed 28 April 2015]; Vincent Burke, 'Catholic Recusancy in Elizabethan Worcestershire', unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Birmingham (1972), p. 22.

<sup>85</sup> Norman Jones, *The Birth of the Elizabethan Age: England in the 1560s* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 32.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>87</sup> Burke, 'Catholic Recusancy', p. 23.

Parker even broke ranks to suggest that Sandys' determination was due to his own covetousness.<sup>88</sup> The archbishop was referring to his belief that Sandys had initiated an early visitation to fill his own pockets, which Sandys denied, claiming that it had actually cost him £24 of his own money – a significant sum.<sup>89</sup> Sandys claimed that no one had ever accused him of covetousness before Parker made his allegation.<sup>90</sup> There is evidence, however, that Sandys was using opportunities to advance his children and family.<sup>91</sup> He granted leases of diocesan manors as well as 'profitable offices and cathedral dignities and prebends' to family members. For this, he made no excuse, claiming that if someone was to profit from his honours as bishop, it might as well be his own family.<sup>92</sup>

Vincent Burke, in his study of recusancy in Elizabethan Worcestershire, criticised Sandys for his 'lack of tact and diplomacy', but even so admitted that the bishop had been genuinely driven towards imposing the Settlement because he believed that in so doing his flock would benefit.<sup>93</sup> At some point, however, whether on his appointment as bishop, or somewhat later, he realised that the Catholic situation in Worcester diocese could be neither easily nor quickly resolved. By 1564 Sandys was asking for advice as to how he might successfully abate Catholicism in his diocese. He wrote to the Council:

The repressing of poperie, the punishment of Offendors, the reforming of religion, the maintenaunce of Justice and the promoting of goddess gospel, I referre to your honourable consideracions, authoritie and wisdomes.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>89</sup> Collinson, 'Sandys, Edwin', p. 917.

<sup>90</sup> 'I was never charged with covetousness:... I am in debt a good somme', SP 12/28/40, Edwin Sandys to the Council, April (?) 1563.

<sup>91</sup> Collinson, 'Sandys, Edwin', p. 918.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 920.

<sup>93</sup> Burke, 'Catholic Recusancy', p. 24.

<sup>94</sup> Mary Bateson (ed.), 'A collection of Original Letters from the Bishops to the Privy Council 1564', *Camden Miscellany IX* (Westminster: Nicholas & Sons, 1895).

Burke concluded that, 'By the end of his tenure of the see of Worcester he was ... a sadly disillusioned man and his letters contain no trace of that enthusiasm that had fired him initially.'<sup>95</sup> This, combined with Sandys' arrogance and rumoured nepotism, caused Worcester's first Elizabethan bishop to be subsequently disregarded by the community and Matthew Parker, the Archbishop of Canterbury disapproved of Sandys' visitation of the parishes in 1560, which Parker believed was a burden on the parishes and meant to increase Sandys' income.<sup>96</sup> Sandys' subsequent translations as the Bishop of London and Archbishop of York were due to the backing of the Privy Council, whose support he acquired in 1574 by ignoring an order of the queen to suppress the preaching known as 'prophesysings', with the excuse that this would cause 'unquietness'.

Because of the disrespect for Sandys among the community, it may have been that his commands for reform were disregarded, or the conservatives may have believed themselves justified in ignoring them. In his own perception, however, Sandys was committed to the task, and he promised conformity within his diocese to the Privy Council in 1569:

And that we with o[re] families will dulia, obedientlie, and religiouslie obs[er]ue the acte, entiteled for the vniformitie of Comon praes, s[er]vice in the Churche, and administration of the sacramente, we have by our selves with our owne hands willinglie subscribed to that forme and tenor as by yo[re] Lordshippes vnto vs was p[re]scribed.<sup>97</sup>

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pp. 1-2.

<sup>95</sup> Burke, 'Catholic Recusancy', p. 24.

<sup>96</sup> Patrick Collinson, 'Sandys, Edwin (1519?-1588)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.eproxy1.lib.hku.hk/view/article/24649>, accessed 1 May 2015].

<sup>97</sup> SP 12/60, f.59, Bishop of Worcester and the Justices of that County, 6 Dec 1569.

Ironically, Sandys' character may even have helped fuel the survival of Catholicism in his diocese.<sup>98</sup> The paradox that a Puritan-leaning preacher benefited the Catholic community of Worcester diocese by unifying them against himself and therefore his methods is obvious, and it may have been precisely what the queen and her Council wished to avoid.<sup>99</sup> Sandys wrote to Cecil, 'Religion is liked as it may serve their owne turne: not one that is earnest and constant, they are but as wavering reedes'.<sup>100</sup> Though the bishop understood that Catholicism remained significant in his diocese, he lacked the necessary qualities to address the issue.

The mood shifted, however, and when Sandys as Archbishop of York preached at Westminster Abbey, he made the common call to rid English churches of superstition, idolatry and Catholic customs at the opening of parliament in 1571.<sup>101</sup> That he was permitted, perhaps encouraged, to make these exhortations in such a public and prominent place is evidence that the tide had turned; caution had been replaced with a heightened sense of national security and the need for unity between church and state, and this would increase dramatically over the next decade.<sup>102</sup> Sandys was finally in tune with the queen and Council in 1571 when he said, 'One God, one king, one faith, one profession is fit for one Monarchy and Commonwealth. Division weakeneth.'<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>99</sup> Haigh, 'Continuity', p. 189.

<sup>100</sup> BL Lansdowne, MS 11, no 70, fol. 156.

<sup>101</sup> Wallace MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I* (London: Edward Arnold, 1993), p. 310; John Ayre (ed.), *Sermons of Edwin Sandys, Archbishop of York* (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1842), pp. 42-43.

<sup>102</sup> Alice Hogge, *God's Secret Agents: Queen Elizabeth's Forbidden Priests and the Hatching of the Gunpowder Plot* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005), p. 47.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47, and J.E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments* (Oxford: Alden Press, 1953), p. 185-186.



There was far greater continuity in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield during Elizabeth I's reign. Thomas Bentham was Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield from 1560 until his death in 1579. Though Elizabeth had reservations about appointing Marian exiles to bishoprics, Bentham found favour with the queen and also with Sir William Cecil and Sir Nicholas Bacon. Bentham was consecrated as bishop on 24 March 1560 and preached on the same day.<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, Bentham faced significant problems during his episcopate. Most of the problems came from the familiar issues of enforcing conformity and securing finances, but there was even a question about where Bentham was to live, as all three of the episcopal residences available to him were leased to others and his own right to them was challenged.<sup>105</sup>

Though Coventry had been a Protestant stronghold since early in the Reformation, residual Catholicism was a problem in some parts of Bentham's diocese, an issue that persisted throughout his episcopate.<sup>106</sup> This was likely recognised immediately for he wrote in 1560 that the people of many churches kept 'theyr images reserved and conveyed away...hoppyng and lookyng for a newe day as may be thereby coiectured'.<sup>107</sup> The strictness with which he performed his visitation five years later in 1565 provides some evidence that his early efforts at parochial reform were not entirely effective. However, there is evidence that Bentham was attempting to attract competent clergymen to his diocese in order to tend to the spiritual needs of the parishioners in accordance with the

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<sup>104</sup> Rosemary O'Day, 'Bentham, Thomas (1513/14-1579)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 5 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 239.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

Settlement.<sup>108</sup> For example, Bentham wanted to give the rural deans a significant role within the diocese. Perhaps he thought they could be a first line of defence against recusants, because he chose men of a radical Protestant nature.<sup>109</sup>

Bentham appointed John Oxenbridge dean of Coventry, and sought to use him in his efforts to install reformed religion within his diocese. Oxenbridge, and other men chosen for the same purpose, was often in favour of radical reform, and therefore fiercely motivated towards the suppression of Catholicism.

Consequently, Bentham's methods proved risky; the Privy Council rejected the appointment of Puritans as deans, and Oxenbridge was suspended.<sup>110</sup> His efforts to install Puritan deans suggest that Bentham felt that measures had to be taken against Catholicism. He travelled himself throughout his archdeaconries and saw first hand that churches held onto the old habits of worship into the 1560s.<sup>111</sup>

However, despite Bentham's efforts, he seems to have been inhibited by the uncooperativeness of his dean and chapter over small squabbles, and especially by the financial situation of the diocese.<sup>112</sup> For many years his legacy was that of a weak bishop who failed to establish authority over the nonconformist clergy under his jurisdiction.<sup>113</sup> Despite the setbacks of Bentham's long episcopate, there are indications in surviving documents that he made further efforts to reform the church and its administration.<sup>114</sup> Regardless of Bentham's good intentions, like Sandys, he was not up to the task facing him.

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Rosemary O'Day, 'Thomas Bentham: a case study in the problems of the early Elizabethan episcopate', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 23 (1972) p. 153.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> O'Day, 'Bentham, Thomas', p. 240.

<sup>112</sup> O'Day, 'Thomas Bentham: a case study', p. 158.

<sup>113</sup> O'Day, 'Bentham, Thomas', p. 241.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

John Scory was Bishop of Hereford from 1559 until his death in 1585. A former Dominican friar at Cambridge, he signed the surrender of the friary there in 1538 and seems to have been a firm supporter of reform. Scory left for the Continent during Mary Tudor's reign, and returned on her death, expecting, as an Edwardian reformer, a prominent position among Elizabeth's new clergy, and indeed he was one of the first bishops to be nominated by Elizabeth. He preached for the queen at Lent in 1559, and was one of those who debated with the Catholic bishops on 21 March 1559, in an attempt to humiliate and disgrace them before Elizabeth's first parliament. In Hereford he encountered obstacles in his efforts for reformation and conformity. He wrote of the local officers in the town that 'so that on the holl Council or election there is not on that is counted favourable to this religion.'<sup>115</sup> He also said that of the Cathedral of Hereford, all the prebendaries and staff were 'rank papists'.<sup>116</sup> Scory set himself the task of eradicating non-conformity, frequently writing to William Cecil for help with reformed ministers. Apart from reforming local offices such as the justices of the peace, he had little success, and his requests for reinforcement fell on the deaf ears of Cecil, who perhaps thought that the backwater diocese was no great threat to national security.<sup>117</sup>

Nicholas Bullingham was Bishop of Lincoln from 1560 until 1571, whereupon he was transferred to the diocese of Worcester, on Sandy's appointment as Archbishop of York, though little is known of his impact on the

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<sup>115</sup> Bateson, 'A collection of Original Letters from the Bishops to the Privy Council 1564', p. 15.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Andrew Pettegree, 'Scory, John (d. 1585)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.eproxy1.lib.hku.hk/view/article/24855>, accessed 25 March 2015].

Catholics of Worcester diocese. Bullingham was born at Worcester, and was private chaplain to Elizabeth until his appointment to the see of Lincoln. Despite his relationship with the queen, this appointment came somewhat as a surprise, as his background was in law, and this set him apart from all the other bishops. Perhaps because of his legal training, he was especially active in the House of Lords. Little is known about his direct impact in enforcing the Religious Settlement in the diocese of Lincoln.<sup>118</sup>

Edmund Scambler was the bishop of Peterborough from 1561 until 1584, and was an active leader within the relatively new diocese. He was sympathetic to the new Puritan clergy, perhaps because of his experience under Mary Tudor, when he supported an underground Protestant church.<sup>119</sup> Scambler had the support of the Earl of Leicester in experimenting with the reform of the parish clergy in the diocese. More extremely, Scambler backed the 'Order of Northampton' in 1570, a Presbyterian form of church government that was supported in the town and had been organised by Percival Wilburn, a preacher and Marian exile. Scambler rescinded his support when the queen and some members of the Council showed displeasure, though this ended Leicester's patronage of the bishop. Scambler was reluctant to act against the Puritan clergy

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<sup>118</sup> Julian Lock, 'Bullingham, Nicholas (1511?–1576)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.eproxy1.lib.hku.hk/view/article/3917>, accessed 25 March 2015].

<sup>119</sup> William Joseph Sheils, 'Scambler, Edmund (c.1520–1594)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.eproxy1.lib.hku.hk/view/article/24777>, accessed 25 March 2015].

and laity in his diocese, and his energy seems to have gone more into supporting them than directly eradicating Catholicism.<sup>120</sup>

John Whitgift became bishop of Worcester in 1577. He held the position until 1583 (at which point he was transferred to the archbishopric of Canterbury), and was followed by four more bishops, all of whom held the episcopate for a relatively short period of time. Whitgift had already established a reputation as an enthusiastic preacher in his early career; the topic of the pope as Antichrist was one to which he would return frequently in the pulpit.<sup>121</sup> Whitgift was enthroned as bishop of a diocese that was well known as a haven for Catholic activity, one that had been by 1577 left to cultivate for some time.<sup>122</sup> But, unlike his predecessor, Sandys, Whitgift could handle the administrative tasks ahead of him.

Whitgift took Catholicism and recusancy very seriously and was required by the Privy Council almost immediately after his accession to give a report of the state of religion within his diocese, in which are recorded the names of thirty-nine recusants in the diocese of Worcester.<sup>123</sup> He reported back to the

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> William Joseph Sheils, 'Whitgift, John (1530/31(?)-1604)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 58 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 718.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> C.D. Gilbert, 'Catholics in the Diocese of Worcester, 1580-1', *Midland Catholic History* 1 (1991), p. 19. The list of recusants is held at Lambeth Palace Library (*Carte Antique et Misc.* IV, no. 183), and contains four names from Warwickshire: Thomas Attwood of Rowington, Thomas Throckmorton of Coughton, Francis Smyth of Wootton Wawen and John Somerville of Wootton Wawen. The letter that Whitgift included with this list is now in the State Papers (SP 12/118, f.21, Bishop Whitgift to the Council, 5 Nov. 1577). This number seems quite low, compared to the large number of recusants in Warwickshire in 1592, according to a Commissioners report (SP/243, f.202, Book containing the 2<sup>nd</sup> certificate of the commission for Warwickshire, Nov. (?) 1592). The difference in numbers may be because many Catholics were church papists in the 1570s, and had not yet crossed the line into recusancy.

Privy Council that Worcester was 'much warped towards popery', that there were seminary priests residing in gentry households and that many of the most prominent families persisted in the old ways, including the Throckmortons in Warwickshire.<sup>124</sup> Whitgift recognised from the beginning of his episcopate that many recusants in his diocese were people who were active and prominent in the community. He met with a large group of the diocese's leading recusants and tried his best to persuade them to conform, to little success.<sup>125</sup> Even though Whitgift's tact and diplomacy seem to have been more progressive than Sandys', the political influence and power of such families was formidable, and may have caused problems for the bishop by undermining his authority locally and his credibility in London.<sup>126</sup>

This fact must have been especially unnerving for the bishop, for unlike Bentham, recusancy was Whitgift's greatest concern. It could not have escaped him that powerful Catholic families could provide support and protection to the conservative laity, in addition to Marian priests in the area. His main fortification against the spread of Catholicism was to ensure that the clergy were reformed and that they preached frequently against Catholicism and conservatism.<sup>127</sup> This style was probably the most efficient means to the desired end of a reformed diocese, and Whitgift had the most success in so doing of all the bishops who held jurisdiction over the diocese of Worcester. In the 1580s, as a result of the activities of the Jesuits and seminary priests, an appreciably stricter stance resulted in regard to recusancy. Suspicion was heightened, as were fines and

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<sup>124</sup> Sheils, 'Whitgift, John', p. 720.

<sup>125</sup> Gilbert, 'Catholics in the Diocese of Worcester', p. 19.

<sup>126</sup> The impact of influential families will be discussed further in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

<sup>127</sup> Sheils, 'Whitgift, John', p. 721.

prosecution.<sup>128</sup> In the diocese of Worcester changes came in several stages (meeting with notable recusants, subsequent arrests and heightened prosecution) and from the initiation of Whitgift.<sup>129</sup> By the 1580s Catholicism was certainly on the decline.<sup>130</sup> Pockets remained, but it is likely that these smaller groups had a weaker inter-parish network than previously, and less or infrequent access to a conservative priest. It is possible that the community now relied on the feudal protection of gentry families more than they had in the first two decades of Elizabeth's reign.

Edmund Freke was bishop of Worcester from 1584 until his death in 1590. Freke was born in Essex and educated at Cambridge. During the reign of Henry VIII, Freke was a canon at the priory of Leighs. After the house was surrendered, he was transferred to the Abbey of Waltham. He remained there until 1540 when it too was surrendered, and he received a pension of £5 per annum.<sup>131</sup> Freke obviously had Catholic roots, but it is possible that he altered his convictions for his own safety and advancement. There is no known documentation of him for about twenty years – from the provision of his pension until into the reign of Elizabeth. At some point during this period he married, at which time he may have received a supplement to his pension. This may explain his wife's 'dominating role in their partnership'.<sup>132</sup> From 1564 he made his way up the clerical hierarchy, acting as archdeacon, canon and dean and became the

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<sup>128</sup> This will be discussed further in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

<sup>129</sup> Gilbert, 'Catholics in the Diocese of Worcester', p. 19.

<sup>130</sup> In Warwickshire, two commissioners' reports show that recusancy had declined from 265 recusants (date unknown, perhaps the mid- to late-1580s) to 205 recusants in 1592. Even so, both recusancy and church papism were rising, and this issue will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 6 of this dissertation.

<sup>131</sup> C.S. Knighton, 'Freke, Edmund (c.1516-1591)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 20 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 895.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

queen's chaplain in 1570, evidence that he towed the line of conformity.<sup>133</sup> Freke was appointed bishop of Rochester in 1571, after which he was translated to the see of Norwich and then Worcester.<sup>134</sup> It seems that Freke may have been a Puritan, or at least pretended to be at some point in his life, but it was claimed that he shed his Puritan persona on account of his formidable wife.<sup>135</sup> Perhaps this was local rumor, and Freke never had Puritan leanings at all, for he seems to have been quite hostile toward this group of non-conforming Protestants.<sup>136</sup> His first visitation in Rochester diocese in 1572 made a point to search out those who maintained the 'heresy' of Puritanism.<sup>137</sup> Freke translated Augustine's *An Introduction to the Love of God*, which was dedicated to the queen and related that he was committed to Protestantism.<sup>138</sup> Curiously, Freke got himself into some controversy while bishop of Norwich for befriending the local Catholic gentry.<sup>139</sup> Such relationships may have been political above religious, but nevertheless may have been influential in promoting religious tolerance while he was in Norwich and afterwards. His final appointment to Worcester saw no

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<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Edward Hasted, 'Archdeacons of Canterbury', *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent: Volume 12* (1801), pp. 556-595. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=63712> Date accessed: 08 February 2011

<sup>135</sup> Collinson, 'Women, Men and Religious Transactions', in *Elizabethan Essays* (London, Hambledon Press, 1994), p. 126.

<sup>136</sup> Matthew Reynolds, *Godly Reformers and Their Opponents in Early Modern England: Religion in Norwich c.1560-1643* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), p. 71.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73. This instance is recorded in the State Papers, SP 15/25/119, f. 282v.



controversy, though the diocese had once again become financially strained. He died in 1591.<sup>140</sup>

After Edmund Freke there was a vacancy in the see of Worcester for about two years, until Richard Fletcher became bishop in 1593. Fletcher seems to have done little to further suspend the already weakening strength of conservatism. By 1593 conservatism among the people had diminished significantly, but not completely.<sup>141</sup> It is likely that people continued to hold onto the old ways in private, yet conformed publicly. Fletcher conducted a visitation of Worcester diocese in August 1593 (it is not known what he found), but he continued to reside in Chelsea after his appointment to Worcester. As an absentee bishop he probably had little real interest in the diocese.<sup>142</sup> Fletcher applied for translation to the see of London, and this was confirmed in January 1595.<sup>143</sup> Fletcher assisted at the consecration of his successor, Thomas Bilson, in June 1596 and died in the same month. He left a will of very Calvinist formula and bequests to the poor.<sup>144</sup> His impact on the Catholic community of Worcester is unknown, but likely minimal due to his short tenure of the office and his absenteeism.

Thomas Bilson, though bishop of Worcester for less than two years, had an interesting ecclesiastical history from his previous and successive bishoprics.

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<sup>140</sup> Knighton, 'Freke, Edmund', p. 896.

<sup>141</sup> There were at least 205 recusants in Warwickshire in 1592, and revisionist historians have argued that church papism actually grew later on in Elizabeth's reign. See especially Marshall, *Reformation England*, p. 186, and Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism and Confessional in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1993), p. 95.

<sup>142</sup> Brett Usher, 'Fletcher, Richard (1544/5-1596)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 20 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 129.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

Bilson had entered Winchester College in 1559 and he had a career there into the 1570s. His time at Winchester occurred simultaneously with the future Jesuit Henry Garnet, who was a pupil there. Garnet later wrote that Bilson did not have cruel intentions towards Catholicism.<sup>145</sup> It is likely that Garnet meant that Bilson, though not malicious against Catholics, saw a need for conformity, as he had been active in the efforts against recusancy since the mid-1570s.<sup>146</sup> He was evidently of the opinion by the mid-1580s that the issue of recusancy had gotten out of hand, because he wrote to Sir Francis Walsingham complaining of the need to enforce even tougher sanctions against recusants.<sup>147</sup>

Bilson wrote a response to William Allen's *Apology and True Declaration* (1581) called *True Difference* (1586) because he felt 'forced for two yeares to lay all studies aside and addict my selfe wholly' to understanding Allen's message and critically addressing its claims.<sup>148</sup> Because of his writings, Bilson became a well-known theologian of national importance and he had connections with Lord Burghley and his son, Robert Cecil. A 'strong episcopal government closely linked to secular authority' was Bilson's main goal as bishop. This ideal was the justification of his compilation of a survey of Worcester made within five weeks of his appointment. The survey assessed the state of the diocese and included an inventory of leading recusants with proposed actions to control them. He was never able to see the fruition of his plans, however. In September 1596, a mere fifteen weeks after becoming Bishop of Worcester, the bishopric of Winchester

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<sup>145</sup> William Richardson, 'Bilson, Thomas (1546/7-1616)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 5 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 738.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 739.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

(his home town) became vacant. Bilson expressed interest and, perhaps because of Cecil's influence, was confirmed as bishop of Winchester in 1597.<sup>149</sup>

The last bishop of Worcester during the reign of Elizabeth was Gervase Babington, who held the bishopric from 1597 until 1610. Babington matriculated from Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1567. The master of the college at the time was John Whitgift, and he became Babington's mentor. Babington was a committed Calvinist and many of his sermons followed the Genevan position of predestination, though there is no evidence that he ever encouraged Puritan non-conformity.<sup>150</sup> The queen nominated Babington to the see of Worcester in 1597, which was by this time one of the richest sees in the country. Babington seems to have been energetic as a bishop and competent as an administrator, and he was commended for his 'constant preaching'. His role as bishop in regard to the suppression of recusants is not immediately clear. It is plausible that by 1597 the issue was not paramount in Worcester, although a commissioners' report taken five years prior demonstrates that there were still recusants and recusant strongholds in the county.<sup>151</sup> One glimpse of his religious stance was in 1606, when Babington had a confrontation with Bishop Bancroft, who suggested that 'the papists might have a toleration of four years', to which Babington replied 'that it was pity they should be tolerated for seven days'.<sup>152</sup>

It is often stated that Catholicism remained unchecked until the 1570s, followed by a decade of severe persecution and punishment in the 1580s. This is

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<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> John S. Macauley, 'Babington, Gervase (1549/50-1610)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 84.

<sup>151</sup> SP 12/243, f.202, Book containing the second certificate of the commission for Warwickshire, Nov. (?) 1592.

<sup>152</sup> Macauley, 'Babington, Gervase', p. 8.

essentially true for the Midlands. There were too many initial administrative duties to be handled at the top of the clerical hierarchy for the queen and Council to delegate responsibility to the parochial level, and anti-Catholic attitudes were not yet popular within communities. The queen saw for herself that the practice of the Religious Settlement on the ground was not always what had been sanctioned, and that the lower clergy tended to act independently.<sup>153</sup> A survey of Warwickshire priests, written by Puritans in 1586, records that John Mascall, the pluralist vicar of Wootton Wawen, Henley in Arden and Ullenhall, had 'growen Idle negligent & slothful... whereof one vpon a rumor of change of religion in mounsiers daies did shave his beard'.<sup>154</sup> The Protestant clergy grew beards in resistance to the Roman clergy, and therefore for Mascall to be noted as having shaved his beard was a telling indication of his personal religious motivations. As late as 1592 a 'popish priest' performed a Catholic baptism on a child in the parish of Solihull, and Henry Sydnall 'Christened the childe of one John Wuse of Gilson gent According to the popishe order' in Tanworth.<sup>155</sup> In addition to the aforementioned baptism, in 1571 John Frith, vicar of Temple Grafton, witnessed (and perhaps wrote) a Catholic will for Richard Smart, a Catholic, of the village of Ludington, near Stratford upon Avon, in which the testator bequeathed his soul 'unto almightie God and to all the company of heaven'.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Hogge, *God's Secret Agents*, p. 150-156.

<sup>154</sup> Richard Savage (trans.). 'Survei of the Ministrie in Warwickshier 1586', *Minutes and Accounts of the corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon and Other Records: Corporation Meeting*, published for the Dugdale Society in London: Oxford University Press, 1929, p. 3.

<sup>155</sup> SP 12/243, f.202, Book containing the second certificates of the Commissioners for the county of Warwick to the Council, November [?] 1592.

<sup>156</sup> Michael Wood, *Shakespeare* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), p. 85.

Added to the propensity of the lower clergy to tend their parish as they saw fit, the clergy of the Midlands may have been out of touch with national politics because of the slowness with which news spread and also the interest of the non-gentry laity in national politics. Richard Cust found that the spread of news and information in seventeenth-century England was still commonly achieved by word of mouth.<sup>157</sup> Provincial centres could not operate in the same fashion as London in terms of access to relevant information or 'the scope and detail of its reports'.<sup>158</sup> This created a sheltered environment where the Catholic community could continue with the practices and habits that they were familiar with, even if the higher clergy was strongly opposed to this.

Naturally, the customs and rituals of the former religion were discouraged, but the effectiveness of this discouragement could not have been immediate. While the vicars, curates, parsons and churchwardens may have removed the offending objects, logically they could not be removed so immediately from the parishioner's minds, for 'many clergy made the Prayer Book services as much like masses as circumspection allowed.'<sup>159</sup> These orders came from the Elizabethan Injunctions that had been distributed in July 1559 with the aim of curbing superstition and encouraging reformed religion, but have been considered by historians as being much more tolerant and conservative than their Edwardian counterparts.<sup>160</sup>

The benefits of the Marian priests for the recusant community during the Elizabethan period have been taken for granted in the past by many historians

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<sup>157</sup> Richard Cust, 'News and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England', *Past & Present* 112 (1986), p. 65.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>159</sup> Haigh, 'Continuity', p. 188.

<sup>160</sup> Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 568.

when compared with the seminary priests and Jesuits.<sup>161</sup> This reflects the sentiments of the queen and Council in the attempt to rid the country of the new priests who had been trained on the Continent and stationed in England. Even though they were recognised as a force within the community, Marian priests were not considered a major influence by the queen and Council, as most of them did not offer resistance in 1559 and conformed to the Religious Settlement.<sup>162</sup>

The impact of the Marian priests on the survival of Catholicism among English parishioners was not lost on the bishops or the Privy Council. Edwin Sandys, Bishop of Worcester, wrote to the Privy Council in 1564:

Popishe and peruerse priestes which, misliking religion, haue forsaken the ministrie and yet liue in corners, are kept in gentillmens houses and had in great estimacion with the people, where they marvailouslie pervert the Simple and blaspheme the truthe.<sup>163</sup>

Thomas Bentham, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, also wrote to the Privy Council in the same year lamenting that in Staffordshire, 'Many pieple think wurs of the regiment & religion than els they wold doo, becaus that diverse lewd priestes have resort thither', suggesting that the parishioners were motivated into non-conformity by the presence of Marian priests.<sup>164</sup>

Catholic communities could also have found guidance from old priests who travelled between towns and counties administering religious rites and guidance. The commissioners' report of 1592 mentions such a priest in Warwickshire:

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<sup>161</sup> Patrick McGrath and Joy Rowe, 'The Marian Priests Under Elizabeth I', *Recusant History* 12 (1985), p. 103.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103

<sup>163</sup> Bateson, 'A Collection of Original Letters from the Bishop's to the Privy Council 1564', p. 3.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

one Barloe Ane old preeste; and a great p[er]suader of other to papistrie;  
resorted mutch to mysham in darbyesheere And into diuvers places in  
Warwicksheere; And that he vsethe to Travale in a Blewe Cote; w[ith] the  
Eagle, and Childe on his Sleeve.<sup>165</sup>

Priests like Barloe were no doubt welcomed into conservative communities that had, by 1592, perhaps been experiencing minimal access to Catholic sacraments and mass.

William Allen and also many Jesuits, including John Gerard and Henry Garnet, were slow to recognise the benefits that the 'old priests' had on the conservative community. As late as 1578 or 1580 Allen wrote:

We understand that not only our own priests, of whom we had but few in the beginning, but others also who were ordained in England formerly in the Catholic times had by their secret administration of the sacraments and by their exhortations confirmed many in the faith and brought back some who had gone wrong.<sup>166</sup>

John Gerard wrote in his autobiography, 'The persecution at that time was directed chiefly against the seminary priests and on the whole was unconcerned with the old men ordained before Elizabeth came to the throne.'<sup>167</sup>

Though the Marian priests were called 'old priests' even in their own time, it is a mistake to imagine them as near death in 1558.<sup>168</sup> In 1596 – nearly the end of Elizabeth's reign – the Jesuit William Holt estimated that there were still forty or fifty Marian priests in England.<sup>169</sup> These members of the clergy guided conservative parishioners alone until seminary priests arrived in England in 1574, and even by the end of Elizabeth's reign there were more Marian priests

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<sup>165</sup> SP 12/243, f.202, 'Book containing the second certificate of the Commissioners for the county of Warwick to the Council', November (?) 1592.

<sup>166</sup> McGrath and Rowe, 'The Marian Priests', p. 105.

<sup>167</sup> Philip Caraman (trans.), *John Gerard: The Autobiography of an Elizabethan* (London : Longmans, Green and Co., 1956), p. 28.

<sup>168</sup> McGrath and Rowe, 'The Marian Priests' p. 108.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108, and Haigh, 'Continuity', p. 188.

than Jesuits in England.<sup>170</sup> The commissioners' report for Warwickshire recusants in 1592 includes three Marian priests and gives the impression that they had been deprived.<sup>171</sup> 'Massing' or Marian priests were recorded in Staffordshire into the 1590s, and even in 1604 the vicar of Baswich and the rector of Blymill were recorded as Marian priests in a Puritan survey of the county.<sup>172</sup>

In contrast with the bishops, it is known that many seminary priests and Jesuits tended to flock to the Midlands on account of the many Catholic gentry families in the area. Marian priests moreover found similar protection in the Midlands, both those deprived of their livings and those who conformed. Deprived Marian priests also continued to administer religious support to one or more conservative families, such as Hugh Hall, who had been priest of Hamstall Ridware in Staffordshire until 1562, and eventually served the Arden family of Park Hall as a kind of chaplain. Instances such as these occurred especially during the first two decades of Elizabeth's reign, as they did in other areas of England.<sup>173</sup> Naturally there were also the parish clergy of the English church, whose success in the reconversion of their parishioners to Protestantism was not guaranteed for a number of reasons, as discussed below.

Catholicism among the people remained a matter of contention among the upper clergy of the Midland counties throughout the reign of Elizabeth. This is known from many surviving document collections, such as letters between the

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<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109. Hogge wrote that in 1591 there were less than a dozen Jesuits at liberty in England, *God's Secret Agents*, p. 150.

<sup>171</sup> SP 12/243, f.202, Book containing the second certificates of the Commissioners for the county of Warwick to the Council, November [?] 1592.

<sup>172</sup> *S.H.C.* 1915, pp. 25, 32.

<sup>173</sup> Haigh, 'Continuity', pp. 183, 187.



higher clergy and the Privy Council, Recusant Rolls and commissioners reports by the justices of the peace of the counties. A commissioners' report for Warwickshire lists a surprisingly high number of recusants as late as 1592.<sup>174</sup> The fact was that remnants of the old religion remained, and the bishops ordered that this situation should be remedied, at first according to the Settlement of Religion, and later under the new statutes, though in practice this proved difficult to enforce. The bishops were not consistently successful, however, because of their own ineffectiveness, other episcopal responsibilities, and even flaws in character. Also, those lower down in the clerical hierarchy did not always have the means, or perhaps the will, to execute the bishop's specific orders. As a consequence, Catholic practices and customs remained common in various degrees from parish to parish, especially within the first decade or two of Elizabeth's reign. Mass was said in gentry family homes at first by Marian priests, and later by seminary priests and Jesuits who arrived in England in 1574 and 1580 respectively. Edmund Campion is believed to have spent a night at Lady Constance Foljamb's home of Throwley Hall in north-east Staffordshire in January 1581.<sup>175</sup> In the same year the Privy Council examined Erasmus Wolseley of Wolseley, Staffordshire, who was also believed to have harboured or helped Campion on his mission to the north of England.<sup>176</sup> The secular priest 'Dr Henshaw' claimed in 1582 that the Jesuits William Holy and Jasper Heywood had converted 228 people in Staffordshire over a period of three months.<sup>177</sup> John

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<sup>174</sup> SP 12/243, f.202, Book containing the second certificates of the Commissioners for the county of Warwick to the Council, November [?] 1592.

<sup>175</sup> Michael Greenslade, *Catholic Staffordshire 1500-1850* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2005), p. 41.

<sup>176</sup> *CSPD 1581-1590*, p. 75.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

Gerard won a Staffordshire convert in 1591 during a hunting party, and a few years later the Jesuit Robert Jones believed to have resided at Paynsley, home of John Draycott.<sup>178</sup> Jesuits Edward Oldcorn and Thomas Lister were posted at Hindlip Hall in Worcestershire, home of the Abingtons.<sup>179</sup> Priests are also known to have been active in homes of non-gentry laity, such as the Grant family near Snitterfield, and the Catesby family at Lapworth, both in Warwickshire.<sup>180</sup>

## *2.6 Associations with Recusant Priests*

Close proximity to and association with recusant priests was integral to the recusancy of the Midlands gentry. Providing hospitality for Catholic priests was an illegal activity that was often taken up by women, and was highly dangerous. A statute of 1585 against Jesuits and seminary priests stated that it was a capital felony for any person to harbour a recusant priest.<sup>181</sup> Between 1585 and 1603, one hundred priests and fifty-three laypersons, including two women, were executed under this statute.<sup>182</sup> About nineteen Catholic priests and one layman from the Midlands counties were executed between the 1580s and 1605.

It is probable that many Catholic gentry members had connections with recusant priests, even if they did not necessarily harbour them in their own homes. The wife of Ralph Sheldon of Worcestershire, who also had a home in the parish of Weston, Warwickshire, frequently called for a priest to come to her home, which was outfitted with the ornaments and clothing needed to celebrate

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<sup>178</sup> Caraman (trans.), *John Gerard*, pp. 37-38; Historical MSS Commission, *Salisbury*, xvii, pp. 500-501.

<sup>179</sup> Hogge, *God's Secret Agents*, p. 140.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150-156.

<sup>181</sup> Rowlands, 'Recusant Women 1560-1640', p. 156.

<sup>182</sup> Philip Caraman (trans.), *William Weston: The Autobiography of an Elizabethan* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1955), p. 16n.

mass.<sup>183</sup> He did not reside with the Sheldons, but was in close contact and proximity. The most famous priest harbourers in Elizabethan England were the sisters Anne Vaux and Eleanor Brookesby, who had major connections in the Catholic Midlands. The sisters began harbouring priests in the 1580s in Shoby, Northamptonshire. By the 1590s they were renting Baddesley Clinton in Warwickshire, which was used not only as a safe-house but as a headquarters of such for yearly Jesuit meetings. The house was searched in 1591 and five Jesuits and two secular priests were found.<sup>184</sup>

There continues to be much debate among historians regarding the intentions and successes of the seminary priests and Jesuits. Haigh found them to be less than admirable in comparison with the Marian priests, dubbing them a 'martyr cult' and arguing that their insistence in tending to the gentry first (or only) was indeed the cause of their failed mission.<sup>185</sup> McGrath does not share Haigh's opinion, however. He insists that the missionary priests cannot be accused of neglect or having 'intended to abandon to damnation the majority of their countrymen'.<sup>186</sup> Michael Carrafiello suggests that the Jesuits 'did not attend to middling and poorer catholics because these catholics had nothing to offer to the larger purpose of the forcible conversion of the country.'<sup>187</sup> A coup would have been necessary to reconvert England to Catholicism, and in order for any

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<sup>183</sup> Rowlands, 'Recusant Women 1560-1640', p. 157.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>185</sup> Haigh, 'From Monopoly to Minority: Catholicism in Early Modern England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 31 (1981), 135-136.

<sup>186</sup> Patrick McGrath, 'Elizabethan Catholicism: A Reconsideration', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984), p. 426.

<sup>187</sup> Michael Carrafiello, 'English Catholicism and the Jesuit Mission of 1580-1581', *The Historical Journal* 37 (1994), p. 771.

coup to be successful, it would need the financial support of the gentry families; or so the priests thought.<sup>188</sup>

Hiding places only became necessary with the coming of seminary priests and Jesuits, and there are dozens of priest's holes in the Midlands, though not divided evenly between the counties. The distribution of hiding places is interesting, and there may be a good explanation. There are many priest's holes to be found in Warwickshire and Worcestershire, but few in nearby Staffordshire, which was also strongly recusant but not served by the Jesuits until 1613. The occurrence of priest's holes does not seem to be determined accordingly to strongly Catholic, or even strongly Protestant areas. They occur where Jesuits were widespread.<sup>189</sup>

The contribution of the seminary priests and Jesuits to the Catholic community of the Midlands was mainly to the gentry families and perhaps to any non-gentry laity associated with these families. This was likely an oversight on behalf of the missionaries. In this region, they would have found pockets of Catholic communities who could have benefitted from the religious instruction of missionaries. The justification of the missionaries for tending primarily to gentry families seems reasonable only to an extent. The missionary priests and especially the Jesuits needed the physical protection that only gentry families could provide, and perhaps they may have found the conservatism of the common Catholics too provincial and ineffectual compared with their own Tridentine doctrine. Nevertheless, the neglect by the missionary priests of the non-gentry laity eased the way to a shift into seigneurial recusancy.

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<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 771.

<sup>189</sup> Michael Hodgetts, 'Elizabethan Priest-Holes I: Dating and Chronology', *Recusant History* 11 (1972), p. 286.

### *2.7 Catholic Gentry and non-gentry lay families*

As has already been noted, there were numerous Catholic gentry families in the Midlands, and in some cases the influence and protection of these Catholic gentry families was the reason that the laity was also able to practice and continue in the old faith for so long.<sup>190</sup> It seems that in the Midlands, Catholicism was a rural phenomenon that was able to survive socially in the region partially thanks to the protection and guidance of these Catholic gentry families, though in other cases, rural Catholicism could survive, though not necessarily thrive, without the influence of gentry families. For example, Ashby Magna in Leicestershire was the recorded home to nine recusants in the Pipe Rolls, more than any other parish in the county and without the direct influence of a Catholic gentry family.<sup>191</sup>

The network of Midland gentry families spread further than their primary county. For example, the Throckmorton family held their principal estate at Coughton Court in Warwickshire, but also owned lands elsewhere in this county, and an estate at Feckenham, Worcestershire, about five miles from Coughton, and some lands outside of the Midlands at Weston Underwood, Buckinghamshire.<sup>192</sup> The Shirley family of Staunton Harold, Leicestershire also held the estate of Astwell Castle in Northamptonshire, in addition to land in Warwickshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire.<sup>193</sup> The broad network that such gentry families created through kin, marriage and friendship stretched throughout the Midlands. These networks will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

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<sup>190</sup> Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People*, p. 137.

<sup>191</sup> Bowler and McCann, *Recusants in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls 1581-1592*.

<sup>192</sup> Cogan, 'Catholic Gentry, Family Networks and Patronage', p. 44.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

It is difficult to estimate the precise number of gentry families in the Midlands because the sixteenth century saw an increase in the number of families applying for gentle status.<sup>194</sup> What figures are available show that there were roughly 155 gentry families in Warwickshire in 1500 and 288 in 1642.<sup>195</sup> While it seems evident that certain gentry families in the Midlands held on to the old ways, it would be false to claim that all – or even most – gentry families of the county were non-conformists. Prominent Warwickshire families such as the Lucys, Grevilles and a cadet branch of the Throckmortons conformed to the Religious Settlement, and perhaps prospered by doing so. The Throckmorton family of Coughton Court is often considered the stronghold of Catholic continuance in the county, but branches of the family did conform themselves, while at least one (Job Throckmorton) identified himself as Puritan.<sup>196</sup>

It is not unreasonable to assume that the gentry attended reformed church services according to the Religious Settlement in the first decade or two of Elizabeth's reign. They may have been comfortable doing so, especially if the parish priest was conservative.<sup>197</sup> Whether they did this as their sole means of

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<sup>194</sup> Certainly the most famous instance of this in Warwickshire is William Shakespeare, who applied for gentle status for his family in 1599. See Peter Ackroyd, *Shakespeare: The Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2005), p. 46; Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare became Shakespeare* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), p. 86; James Shapiro, *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2010), p. 19; Michael Wood, *Shakespeare* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), p. 166-167.

<sup>195</sup> Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales*, p. 11. Heal and Holmes do not make an estimate for any other Midland county.

<sup>196</sup> Susan Cogan, 'Reputation, Credit and Patronage: Throckmorton Men and Women, c. 1560-1620', in Marshall and Scott, *Catholic Gentry in English Society*, p. 69.

<sup>197</sup> This does seem to change significantly later in the reign, with many Catholic gentry reverting to recusancy, as Christopher Haigh found in the diocese of Carlisle and three Chester deaneries. Haigh revealed that of 102 recusants, seventy-three were gentry and their servants in 1596. Christopher Haigh, 'The

spiritual guidance, or in conjunction with the services of a Marian priest in their home, is a moot point and may have differed from household to household.

Bishop Whitgift wrote to the Privy Council in 1577 that he knew of no gentlemen in his diocese (Worcester) that absented themselves from church. He wrote, 'For in that visitation there was not one Gentleman nor p[er]son of wealth presented for not coming to here dyvine service'.<sup>198</sup> If a gentleman or a member of his family did absent themselves from church during these early years, the offence was probably discreetly ignored by authorities. Whitgift referred to the incompetency of diocesan administration during the episcopate of his predecessor Edwin

Sandys:

I doubt not, most honourable, but that you vnderstand howe much harme lenitye did the last tyme, that the like Certificates were made by yo[re] hono[rs]. For diverse of them being then sent home without ponishment and vnenformed were not only thereby anymated to contynewe in their Willfullnesse, but others also by their examples allured to the like.<sup>199</sup>

Also, enforcement of the Recusancy Laws such as the payment of fines for non-attendance at reformed church services and swearing the Oath of Supremacy, were often evaded.<sup>200</sup> There was less hostility between Catholic and Protestant groups at this time because the religious division between them was still unclear.<sup>201</sup>

In the 1580s demands from the central government heightened pressure on those who continued to follow the Catholic faith to conform. This shift in policy was due to influences from the continent, principally the arrival of the

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Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation', in Haigh (ed.), *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 200.

<sup>198</sup> SP 12/118, f.21, Bishop Whitgift to the Council, 5 November 1577.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> Cogan, 'Reputation, Credit and Patronage', p. 73.

<sup>201</sup> Arnold Pritchard, *Catholic Loyatism in Elizabethan England* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979), p. 3.

Jesuits and threats from Spain.<sup>202</sup> Pressure on Catholics and recusants remained strong for the rest of the reign. Even so, it seems that in Catholic gentry households a full liturgical year was celebrated as much as possible.<sup>203</sup> Priests frequently lived in or visited the houses of the gentry, and so these families – and perhaps their network and servants – had frequent access to the celebration of mass and the other sacraments.<sup>204</sup> In 1584, Lady Throckmorton (wife of Sir John Throckmorton and mother of the recently executed Francis Throckmorton), had enough religious support from various recusant priests that she was able to send one away to Rome to deliver letters to her son and collect religious relics.<sup>205</sup> Ralph Sheldon of Beoley, Worcestershire, was charged in 1594 for having ‘Mass in his howse And resorte of Priestes: A priest kept allwaies in his howse.’<sup>206</sup> Even so, older members of these families must have felt detached from medieval Catholicism. It seems that mass was celebrated continuously during Elizabeth’s reign, but it is not unreasonable to assume that the celebration of holy days, devotions at nearby wells and relics, and pilgrimages were reduced, even among gentry families who had a significant network within the region.

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<sup>202</sup> Marie B. Rowlands, ‘Recusant Women 1560-1640’, in Mary Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society 1500-1800* (Methuen: London, 1985), p. 151.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>204</sup> Marie B. Rowlands found that, in general, recusant gentry women ‘...catechized their servants daily and taught neighbours and tenants’ children the Pater, the Creed and the Commandments of God and the Church.’ ‘Recusant Women 1560-1640’, p. 165.

<sup>205</sup> SP 12/173/1, f.40, Hugh Cholmondeley to Francis Walsingham, 25 September 1584.

<sup>206</sup> SP 12/249, f.145, Names of charged Catholics, 16 August 1594.



## 2.8 Religious Identity

Even though the liturgical cycle was observed as closely as shifting circumstances permitted, many Catholics must have felt distanced from their community and conforming members of their families, in addition to disobeying the country's laws. It is difficult to assess completely the religious identity of the Catholic gentry of the Midlands because they themselves were reconstructing their religious identity throughout the reign. It is possible that the Reformation encouraged Catholics of all social classes to mingle and create bonds with each other for the sake of a religious community in a way that would have been impossible before the break from Rome. Peter Marshall argued that, 'In a period when religion and politics were thoroughly and inextricably intermeshed, religious choices inevitably impacted upon the status of a family and on the nature of relationships within it.'<sup>207</sup> Catholic gentry now had a closer connection with the Catholic laity that had not existed before because of the vast social divisions between the classes. However, Catholic gentry were likewise now divided from their Protestant counterparts. For example, friction between the Catholic gentleman of Warwickshire Edward Arden and the Protestant Sir Thomas Lucy grew in the early-1580s, eventually becoming strong enough to play a part in Arden's downfall in 1583.<sup>208</sup>

This polarisation was clearly visible even within gentry families, but perhaps nowhere more obviously than with the Warwickshire cousins Job and Francis Throckmorton. The former was a radical Puritan and author of the

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<sup>207</sup> Peter Marshall, 'Faith and Identity in a Warwickshire Family: the Throckmortons and the Reformation', *Dugdale Society Occasional Papers* 49 (2010), p. 3.

<sup>208</sup> This incident will be discussed further in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Marprelate tracts, and the latter a Catholic who was executed as a traitor for his involvement in an attempt to overthrow the queen and place the Catholic Mary Stuart on the throne of England.<sup>209</sup> This division among classes was not always the case, however. Lord Vaux continued to enjoy country sports with his Protestant friend, Edward Montagu, who resided at Boughton, some six miles from Vaux estate of Harrowden Hall.<sup>210</sup>

In parishes where Catholic gentry families resided the Catholic identity of the community may have been consolidated on account of semi-feudal relationships that existed there. Scarisbrick argued that the survival of Catholicism could not have been possible without these family homes acting as mass-centres, which consisted of families and their networks of dependants and servants, all headed by a fluctuating group of priests.<sup>211</sup>

## *2.9 Conclusion*

This chapter presented an overview of the geography and ecclesiastical and political jurisdictions of the Midland counties, as well as an introduction to the prominent Catholic families in the area. This summary aimed to make the complex research questions to be addressed in the following chapters easier to grasp, establishing the regional context for this exploration of post-Reformation Catholicism. The complexity of interlocking civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions and the different people involved in administering these jurisdictions, or failing

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<sup>209</sup> Marshall and Scott, 'Introduction', p. 5; Marshall, 'Faith and Identity in a Warwickshire Family', p. 36.

<sup>210</sup> BL Add. MS 39828, f. 59r.

<sup>211</sup> Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People*, p. 149.

to administer to them effectively, play an important role in laying the foundation of Catholicism and recusancy in the Midlands.

### 3. Communities and Kinship Networks

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In post-Reformation England, Catholic gentry and laity employed networks to alleviate the consequences of the Religious Settlement against non-conformists. When the formal structures of the English Catholic Church collapsed with the Reformation, the formation and maintenance of networks of family, friends and patronage sustained the informal church, and Catholic networks became a substitute for the parish church and community. These Catholic networks were significant for their role in keeping Catholics connected with one another, and patronage relationships allowed Catholics to exercise some power and authority at both the local and national levels. These networks are evident within the Catholic community of the Midlands during the reign of Elizabeth I.

The complicated religious scenario in which English Catholics found themselves raises the need to define words such as 'community' and 'network', just as terms such as Catholic, recusant, Church Papist, and conservative required clarity. This dissertation uses the term 'community' to include the wider Catholic population who chose, to whatever degree, to adhere to traditional Catholicism, but within a local setting. The term 'network' must necessarily include members of the Catholic community, but implies an active role within and outside of the local community, with the purpose to protect the local and national Catholic cause.

The Catholic community used kin and marriage networks along with

neighbours and patrons as a means to maintain their religious non-conformity. This is prominent and obvious among gentry and noble families, though evidence is less clear about the methods employed by non-gentry laity to include themselves in these networks or as clients. The gentry used the network not only for protection but also as a means to continue the socio-political role to which they were accustomed before the Reformation. Catholic networks are interesting and an important model of research, as they were a customary aspect of early modern society, especially among the gentry and aristocracy. After the reformation of Elizabeth's Religious Settlement in England, Catholics continued the practice of utilising networks of friends, community and patron-client relationships. In this way, English Catholics of the Midlands were able to exercise power and prestige within their own communities and at times in the larger local or national framework.

Various levels of the Catholic networks overlapped each other, but none were independent of the others. Indeed, at times it appears that the networks were not fuelled primarily by religion, but dependent upon kin and community for social or political gain. Scholars of English Catholicism now suggest that these networks must be understood within a broader geography, not only within the British Isles, as English Catholicism was not insular. While some Midland Catholics did travel abroad, the full extent of a wider European network and community is outside the scope of this research, though mention will be made of several Midland Catholics who chose to leave their local communities for short or longer periods of time, and some attention will be paid to links with exile

communities in the Netherlands and France.<sup>1</sup>

The goal of this chapter is to explore the dynamic and function of the Catholic networks of kinship and patronage to understand the impact these networks had at the regional level. It is especially interesting to understand how some Midland Catholics used the networks to demonstrate non-violent political resistance. There was no unanimity among Catholics in the encouragement of violent tactics against the queen and government. Small pockets of aggressive Catholics, including some from the Midlands, flocked together to support foreign Catholic forces such as Spain, and on account of these militants other Catholics of a non-threatening nature were sometimes imagined to be a formidable force. Many paid dearly for it. Unlike the militant minority, the majority of Catholics hoped that by conforming to the demands of the state, showing loyalty to the crown and eschewing violence, they would eventually distance themselves from their more extreme co-religionists.<sup>2</sup> When this is shown alongside the well-known anecdotes of Catholic militant defiance, it becomes clear that sixteenth-century Catholics were not a unified band of brothers. After all, one cannot research early modern Midland Catholicism without stumbling over the Gunpowder Plot, the exemplar of Catholic frustration. But with the addition of the predominantly loyal Catholic community, we can understand the network as it evolved without direction – incorporating the entire community.

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<sup>1</sup> Katy Gibbons, *English Catholic Exiles in Late Sixteenth Century Paris* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2011), p. 6; Michael C. Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c. 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 496.

<sup>2</sup> Francis Edwards, *Plots and Plotters in the Reign of Elizabeth I*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), pp. 74-75.

### *3.1 Impact at the Local Level*

In August 1580 Ralph Sheldon, a Worcestershire Catholic, was summoned to appear before the Privy Council. Standing at his side and also under suspicion was a Midland Catholic cohort made up of his friends and relatives; the Lords Paget, Compton and Vaux, and Sir Thomas Tresham, Sir William Catesby, Sir John Arundel and Sir Thomas Throckmorton.<sup>3</sup> Sheldon was questioned about his religion. His agreement in January 1581 to conform outwardly to the Religious Settlement was expedient, made to win his release from the Marshalsea, as he had court connections, including the Dudley brothers through his father's marriage, and his local influence through business and land holding was considerable. Prior to 1580 Sheldon was believed to have been above political disloyalty by the Privy Council, despite the fact that he maintained a Catholic network, by cultivating purposefully Catholic relationships. Neither embarrassed nor disheartened, he lived a public life that included high-ranking connections with both Catholics and Protestants. Sheldon, in contrast with more anti-Protestant recusants, suggests a more nuanced view of 'loyalist non-conformity'. He, along with other locally prominent Catholic acquaintances, was in a politically sensitive situation, and he and his friends manoeuvred within the circumstances using varying methods.

Although Sheldon promised on his release from prison in 1581 that he would 'yield himself dutiful and to repair to church', he evidently only conformed outwardly, as he was accused of being a recusant for the rest of his life. The priest Hugh Hall confessed to saying Mass at Sheldon's house during

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<sup>3</sup> *APC*, xii, p.166, 254, 301-02.

interrogations regarding his involvement in the Somerville Plot of 1583.<sup>4</sup> In 1585 John Russell attempted to divorce Sheldon's daughter on account of his recusancy, but in a Star Chamber court session, Sheldon claimed that he was not ashamed of his beliefs and that he was as good a man as any.<sup>5</sup> In 1587 he was examined by the Grand Jury of Worcestershire and indicted. In this instance Bishop Whitgift gave surety for his conformity.<sup>6</sup> These brushes with the law seem minor when compared with the accusation in 1594 that he may have tried, or was at least willing, to finance a plot against the queen's life. This information came from the confessions of Richard Williams and Edmund York, both soldiers in the army based in the Netherlands, and Henry Young. They claimed that Sheldon and William Allen shared correspondence, and had planned to put William Stanley, Earl of Derby, a descendant of Henry VIII's sister Mary, on the throne after the assassination of the queen. Sheldon's house was searched and he was interrogated.<sup>7</sup> It is possible that Sheldon escaped punishment through the patronage of Christopher Hatton, who claimed to have seen Sheldon at Church in London, along with others in his network such as Mr Thimbelby (possibly his son-in-law), and Thomas Throckmorton. Young confessed that the Lord Chancellor claimed that Sheldon 'was at church at his Chappell at London', but

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<sup>4</sup> SP 12/164, f.141, Examination of Hugh Hall, Priest, 32 December 1583; J.H. Pollen, 'The Memoirs of Father Robert Parsons' CRS, Misc. II, 1906, p. 27; CRS, Misc. IV, 1907, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> STAC 5/R12/34; STAC 5/S15/38; STAC 5/R41/32.

<sup>6</sup> SP 12/206, f.175, Remarks upon the evidence and proceedings of the Grand Jury upon the indictment of Recusants, particularly in the case of Mr Sheldon, 1587.

<sup>7</sup> SP 12/249, f.217, Examination of Rich. Williams before Blount, Bacon, and Waad, 31 August 1594.



Young continued, 'when in truthe ... he was not at London at that tyme'.<sup>8</sup> The outcome is unknown, but thereafter Sheldon appears infrequently in records, and kept himself away of trouble. The peace in which he spent the last decade of his life may have come from the patronage of Hatton and Robert Cecil, whom Sheldon thanked in 1603 for his support.<sup>9</sup>

The process of maintaining a non-conformist community required recusant Catholics to consider their various ties and relationships with one another and explore the methods by which these ties could be utilised to strengthen and protect this persecuted group. This is not to suggest that such a community was defined chiefly by its non-conformity; but a network, or more precisely, a web of networks, was the natural solution to the new problem that post-Reformation Catholics in England faced. Constructing and maintaining a network provided security and protection with other non-conformists against the authorities who were bound to enforce anti-Catholic laws. A functioning network necessarily meant loyalty to fellow Catholics and one's own conscience; however, as discussed below, the reaction of the government was to infiltrate the religious networks with its own agents, and use membership of the networks as evidence of treason. This naturally damaged the Catholic networks, but it was evidence that the networks functioned efficiently, something not always recognised. These networks inhabited different interlocking spheres which might be categorised as local, underground, clergy and exile, as well as formal

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<sup>8</sup> SP 12/249, f.152, Declaration of Hen. Young, 16 August 1594; SP 12/249, f.171, Confession of Edm. Yorke before the Earl of Essex and Lord Cobham, 21 August 1594.

<sup>9</sup> *HMC Hatfield*, XV, p. 60.

and informal, but they remained, for the most part, integrated into the wider local and reformed communities.

For Elizabethan recusants, family and kinship groups were the first thread woven into the network. From there the network becomes more complex, and also more difficult to trace. Theoretically speaking, there are two broad types of networks, relational and functional. A relational network can be conspirative, existing within an institution such as a prison or university, between friends or family members, 'in the world' kind of connections such as between a writer and printer, the exiled community, and finally female networks, since it was frequently women who harboured priests. Functional networks were more abstract, but could be created through the delivery of letters, political resistance, direct financial support, the underground community, advisors, propaganda and recommendations of contact. Examples of both classes of networks will be given for the Midlands below.

Rather than being confined to isolated pockets of Catholics within a parish or county, a network enabled interaction, straightforward or indirect, with other Catholics in neighbouring counties, different social circles, or even abroad. Most of the networks that were relevant to Midland Catholics were informal, such as kin, neighbours and friends, although formal associations were also possible through business, education and local government, since Catholics remained active members of society. These informal networks played a crucial role in maintaining the Catholic community, and gave non-conformists a common purpose.<sup>10</sup> Late in Elizabeth's reign, Thomas Bilson, the Bishop of

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<sup>10</sup> Liesbeth Corens, 'Sermons, Sodalties, and Saints: the Role of Religious Houses for the English Expatriate Community', in J. De Maeyer, C. Mangion, and K.

Worcester, wrote to Robert Cecil about the impact that powerful local Catholic families had had in the area:

I have viewed the state of Worcester diocese, and find it, as may somewhat appear by the particulars here enclosed, for the quantity as dangerous as any place that I know. In that small circuit there are nine score recusants of note, besides retainers, wanderers, and secret lurkers, dispersed in forty several parishes, and six score and ten households, whereof about forty are families of gentlemen that themselves or their wives refrain the church, and many of them not only of good wealth but of great alliance, as the Windsors, Talbots, Throgmortons, Abingtons and others, and in either respect, if they may have their forth, able to prevail much with the simpler sort.<sup>11</sup>

Bilson was evidently aware that the network had given strength to the community:

How weak ordinary authority is to do any good on either sort long experience hath taught me, excommunication being the only bridle the law yieldeth to a bishop, and either side utterly despising that course of correction, as men that gladly and of their own accord refuse the communion of the church both in sacraments and prayers.<sup>12</sup>

Catholic networks were created to protect the community, but it is not correct to assume that if members of the community needed protection this was necessarily because they were engaging in militant anti-political activities. Catholics could challenge political power through various means, and the network aided in this.<sup>13</sup> Most studies of post-Reformation Catholicism have focused on either the political opposition of the Catholics in the form of violence,

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Suenens (eds.), *Female Religious across the North Sea. Monastic Interactions between the British Isles and the Low Countries* Trajecta 21 (Louvain, 2012), p. 122.

<sup>11</sup> R.A. Roberts (ed.), 'Dr Bilson Bishop of Worcester, to Sir Robert Cecil', in *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquis of Salisbury, Preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire* Vol 6: 1596, p. 265.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Margaret Sena, 'William Blundell and the networks of Catholic dissent in post-Reformation England', in Alexandra Shepard and Phil Whithington (eds.) *Communities in Early Modern England* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 55.

or the religious persecution of the community. By equating resistance with violence as the sole Catholic means of activism, researchers have overlooked various other methods of non-violent political resistance. This has begun to change, however, and historians are now assessing the political role of recusant and non-recusant Catholics, and how this was achieved because of a functioning network.<sup>14</sup> Michael Questier's research on a circle of Yorkshire Catholics who sought to infiltrate the Elizabethan regime by supporting the accession of James I demonstrated the political knowledge and power of Catholics.<sup>15</sup> Questier also argued that the Browne family of Sussex, headed by the first and second Lords Montague, used the Catholic network in the south-east as a stage to debate the future of Catholicism in England, by exercising the political and ecclesiastical position that the family enjoyed.<sup>16</sup> Margaret Sena has countered the common theory of isolated Catholic gentry families by examining the Blundells of Lancashire who actively engaged in the underground Catholic Church.<sup>17</sup> Most relevant to my own research is Sandeep Kaushik's study of the Northamptonshire gentleman Sir Thomas Tresham. Kaushik argued that Tresham and others blurred the line between Catholic loyalism and resistance, and that non-recusant Catholics had a range of options for political resistance, besides violence.<sup>18</sup> This demonstrates that Catholics, even as non-conformists,

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<sup>14</sup> This approach was anticipated by Caroline Hibbard, *Charles I and the Popish Plot* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1983) and 'The Contribution of 1639: Court and County Catholicism', *Recusant History* 16 (1980), pp. 42-56.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Questier, 'The politics of religious conformity and the accession of James I', *Historical Research* 71 (1998), pp. 14-30.

<sup>16</sup> Questier, *Catholicism and Community*.

<sup>17</sup> Sena, 'Networks', p. 55.

<sup>18</sup> Sandeep Kaushik, 'Resistance, Loyalty and Recusant Politics: Sir Thomas Tresham and the Elizabethan State', *Midland History* 21 (1996), pp. 37-72.

were members of a coherent community, not only physically, because the community could be expanded through the network, but also sociologically. The network was essential for Catholics to remain unified with the kingdom, especially through client-patron relationships with Protestants. Catholic gentry continued to forge these bonds with both Catholics and Protestants. Protestants in positions of authority could not refuse the continuation of this practice to non-conformists, as this might have caused unnecessary unrest among the Catholic gentry community. Patron-client relationships kept gentry families consolidated into the wider local community. Recent research reveals limitations in the arguments advanced by historians such as John Bossy and Christopher Haigh; it is unwise to categorise Catholics as either representative of the medieval past or of the Tridentine changes. The political and social role of Elizabethan Catholics has been reassessed, revealing that the model of an introspective and isolated gentry and laity simply has little historical weight, and this holds true for the Midlands as well.

Looking at the Catholic community through the angle of networks skews our natural sense of community as geographically defined, as an entity that can be placed physically in a specific area.<sup>19</sup> A parish map of Warwickshire created from the data extracted from a commissioners' report of recusants in 1592 shows where known recusants, recusant priests and conforming recusants lived in the county according to parish.<sup>20</sup> With this evidence, it seems that the natural landscape had an impact on the preservation of Catholicism in Warwickshire, and perhaps the network along with it. Most pockets of Catholics in

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<sup>19</sup> Corens, 'Sermons, Sodalities, and Saints', p. 122.

<sup>20</sup> SP 12/243, f. 202, Book containing the second certificates of the commissioners for the county of Warwick to the Council, November [?], 1592.

Warwickshire lived either in the Forest of Arden, a heavily wooded country that was dense and lacked easily traversable roads, or near the borders of Oxfordshire and Worcestershire, counties known for their conservatism and networks of missionary priests. Near the border of Worcestershire, more than thirty Catholics lived in the parish of Tanworth in 1592. The landscape may have offered religious sanctuary to some of the Catholic community. That some natural factors, such as landscape, impacted the survival of Catholicism by physically protecting the community and therefore hindering the efforts of the state, is extraordinarily significant. Vincent Burke has found a similar phenomenon in Elizabethan Worcestershire, but this may be unique to only some Midland counties.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, Wendy Brogden's recent research has found this to not be the case for Herefordshire, where, while recusants lived on the border of Monmouthshire, many lived in parishes around the city of Hereford.<sup>22</sup>

Looking at the Midlands suggests geography can be a valuable element in discovering the layout of the region's religious practices or beliefs. England has commonly be split between the conservative north and west, and the reformed south and east. Though it is a mistake to be completely persuaded by this generalisation as there was nationwide religious diversity, the Midlands stand unique and unclassified by this criterion. Bossy summed up Elizabethan Catholics' requirements as 'the bastard feudal connection of the borders'; 'the small but independent seigneurial households in areas which though settled were not easily in reach of government influence and backed on ground inaccessible or unsubdued'; 'and the larger but increasingly scattered

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<sup>21</sup> Vincent Burke, 'Catholic Recusancy in Elizabethan Worcestershire', unpublished M.A. Thesis, The University of Birmingham (1972), p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> I am grateful to Wendy Brogden for this information.

households of the rest of the county, the centre of substantial complexes of land with a tradition of wider dominance and large scale hospitality, occupied by families which by marriage and scale of life merged into the lesser peerage.’<sup>23</sup> The Midlands satisfied all these essentials to some extent, but the overall picture is one of diversity. The counties were far enough away from the central government to hinder communication and enforcement of the laws. This realisation was not new to Elizabeth’s reign, and had previously resulted in the establishment of the Council of the Welsh Marches, whose jurisdiction included the West Midlands. However, the precise area of authority was a concern during Elizabeth’s reign, and the council did not operate effectively at observing and controlling the West Midlands and reporting back down to London.<sup>24</sup> The Midlands also differed from areas such as the North in that there was a strong and established Protestant component to the counties in both the lay and gentry populations; for example, the Dudley brothers wielded local power. Also, there are fewer pockets of Catholicism to be found near Coventry, Hereford and Worcester, cities known for early Protestantism, and with easy transportation to and from London.

That Catholic families survived in isolation, and their conflicts, if any, were with Protestants is discredited when evaluated within the context of networks. The network and patron-client relationships allowed English Catholics a range of possibilities to engage with the reformed community in secular life. In this way, it becomes clear that the network was fluid, and at times

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<sup>23</sup> John Bossy, ‘The Character of Elizabethan Catholicism’, *Past and Present* 21 (1962), p. 39.

<sup>24</sup> Penry Williams, *The Council in the Marshes of Wales under Elizabeth I* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1958), pp. 181-204.

uncharacterised as 'Catholic' given the involvement with Protestant neighbours and kin, within the local community. Before moving on with this point, this 'standard model' and its opponents should be introduced here.

The creation of the network resulted in more than protection – it built a sustainable medium for intellectual and polemical debate, especially with the gentry families and clergy. This could include links with seminaries and convents on the continent, where Midland Catholics sent their children for religious training, such as Francis Tresham's daughter, Lucy, who became a nun at St Monica's in Louvain and took the name Mother Winifred, possibly in remembrance of a pilgrimage her father's friends had taken to St Winifred's Well leading up to the Gunpowder Plot. This makes the important argument that there was no single point of view among Catholics, and that variation and indeed disagreements were common, and had to be negotiated within Catholic networks. For example, Robert Brokesby of Shoby sat in Parliament for Leicester in the 1560s, when he was described as 'earnest in religion', but in the 1570s he had been absent from reformed services so frequently as to draw the suspicion of Edmund Scambler, Bishop of Peterborough.<sup>25</sup> He was reported to the Privy Council as an absentee in 1577, and in 1581 Scambler was of the opinion that Brokesby was a committed Catholic.<sup>26</sup> Such tendencies spread from parishes to counties, and into Europe among the exiled community. Indeed the network made little sense unless it could cross county and even national boundaries, as the Midlands network did.

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<sup>25</sup> Hasler, *The Commons* vol. I, p. 488.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*



Local networks were naturally small and had some geographical limits; at the same time, however, these networks could offer protection to Catholics in counties not their own and further afield than the Midlands. We know that Midlands Catholics were able to rely on the network to avoid being fined and imprisoned because they were often recorded as absent from their homes when authorities came in search of them. If possible, individuals and families would cross parish boundaries in order to be absent when searches in their home parishes took place. In this case, it seems that most Midlands Catholics resorted to other Midlands counties, or parishes within their own county, but there are records of others venturing further afield. Alternatively, Lancashire recusant William Blundell sought protection in the Midlands county of Staffordshire, so there was certainly fluidity within the national community.<sup>27</sup> Warwickshire Commissioners in 1592 recorded Thomas Stonley of Kinbury, Warwickshire, who was living with Samuel Marrowe of Berkswell in the same county, and George Harris of Halesowen, Worcestershire, had left his home to live in Solihull, Warwickshire. The commissioners wrote that both men were very poor and unable to cover the cost of their imprisonment, nor did they have friends who were able to bear the responsibility of either the cost, or to find them a home in a reformed household.<sup>28</sup> Lady Philipa Gifford of Sheldon, Warwickshire, claimed to have reformed herself, and to attend reformed service in Buckinghamshire. No one in Sheldon could confirm this, so the commissioner was forced to find proof elsewhere. Her servant, John Grisham, was also presented for recusancy, but the

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<sup>27</sup> Sena, 'Networks', p. 58; Lancashire County Record Office, 'Great Hodge Podge', fol. 202v.

<sup>28</sup> SP 12/243, f.202, Book containing the Second Certificates of the Commissioners to the County of Warwick to the Council, November [?] 1592.

commissioner recorded that since he was at times in Sheldon and at others at his own parish of Oldnall, he was only able to confirm that Grisham went to reformed services once or twice.<sup>29</sup>

There are numerous examples of this practice of evasion, recorded in 1592. John Keeling, a servant to John Wyse of Coleshill, Warwickshire, left the county for an unknown destination. Thomas Blunte and his wife, who was previously presented in Idlycote, were found not there in 1592. Robert and John Grissolds, brothers of Solihull, were thought to be 'beyond the seas', but then could also have been 'lurking in England'. The vagrant Francis Hollyoak, alias William Francis, of Hampton in Arden, could not be found. James and Richard Bishop of Brailes had left the parish for the continent, and the commissioners recorded they were believed to have joined a seminary, like their brother William. Robert Whateley, an old Marian priest, could sometimes be found in Henley in Arden, though the commissioners could not track him down. Young Walter Chetuynde of Grendon, Warwickshire, was found in Staffordshire, whereas his neighbour Roger Wall had gone to Shropshire. Henry and Judith Freeman of Tamworth fled to Ireland, and Eleanor Brooksby was not found in Tanworth, Warwickshire, but in Leicestershire, where her husband came from.<sup>30</sup> The east-Midlands experienced a similar practice. Eusbie Isham, the sheriff of Northampton in 1585, wrote to Walsingham:

I haue travelled vnto these places w[i]th certaine Iustices next adioyninge to haue manifested the effect of her ma[jes]ties pleasure but diuers of them were not at home nor w[i]thin the Countie as by examination and searche yt dothe appeare: [...] names knowen vnto any w[i]th whom I

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* Eleanor is recorded as 'Elizabeth Brooksby.

haue had conference aboute the same and as we suppose there was not any suche at any time dwelling in the said countie.<sup>31</sup>

While Catholicism was forced to become domesticated, it remained unabated, which must have been especially unnerving for John Whitgift, Bishop of Worcester from 1577-1583. Recusancy was Whitgift's greatest concern, unlike other Midland bishops such as Thomas Bentham, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield from 1560-1579, whose frustrations of his clergy stunted his efforts at imposing conformity. It could not have escaped Whitgift that powerful Catholic families could provide support and protection to the conservative laity, in addition to Marian priests in the area. His main fortification against the spread of Catholicism was to ensure that the clergy were reformed and that they preached frequently against Catholicism and conservatism.<sup>32</sup> This style was probably the most efficient means to achieve the desired end of a reformed diocese, and Whitgift was the most successful in accomplishing this of all the bishops who held jurisdiction over the Worcester diocese. In the 1580s, as a result of the activities of the Jesuits and seminary priests, an appreciably stricter stance resulted with regard to recusancy. Suspicion was heightened, as were fines and prosecution. In the diocese of Worcester, Whitgift initiated changes in several stages, such as the Bishop meeting with notable recusants, subsequent arrests, and heightened prosecution.<sup>33</sup> Steadfast pockets remained, however, and it is

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<sup>31</sup> SP 12/183, f.143, 'Eusbie Isham, sheriff of Northampton, to Walsyngham', 23 October 1585.

<sup>32</sup> William Joseph Sheils, 'Whitgift, John (1530/31(?)-1604)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 58 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 721.

<sup>33</sup> C.D. Gilbert, 'Catholics in the Diocese of Worcester, 1580-1', *Midland Catholic History* 1 (1991), p. 19.

possible that these smaller groups were forced to strengthen their inter-parish network.

### *3.2 Non-Violent Political Resistance*

We ought not to view this as proof that any Catholic engaged in the network, or even in the network of political resistance, was therefore open to violent and forceful action in support of the Catholic cause. Rather, Catholics could demonstrate peaceful political resistance by opposing policies and harsh enforcement of the anti-Catholic laws. In the Midlands, this was illustrated especially by Thomas Tresham, who had a reputation in Northamptonshire as a lay Catholic leader. Tresham demonstrated an awareness of national politics, so he differs from the model of recusant political and social isolation. For example, in 1581, the Spanish ambassador Don Bernardino de Mendoza and Sir Thomas Tresham were discussing ways to re-establish Catholicism in England; 'it is with him that I deal ... Although Thomas Tresham is a prisoner, I am in constant communication with him by means of priests', Mendoza claimed.<sup>34</sup> Many of the terms we use to categorise English Catholics, such as papist, recusant, conservative, non-conformist, church papist and Romish, refer to inclinations and trends, not to a qualitative classification of a group or community. With strict terms as our guiding approach, it is difficult to see and understand the fluidity of Catholicism and the Catholic community with their Protestant counterparts. Catholics defined boundaries, but they also fitted into the wider community in

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<sup>34</sup> CSP Spanish, Eliz. III, pp. 236.

social, cultural and political contexts.<sup>35</sup> For example, the social importance of Catholic families can be seen in marriage alliances that may seem peculiar; Mary Throckmorton, daughter of Sir George and Katherine Throckmorton, married Sir John Hubaud, Constable of Kenilworth, in 1564. Hubaud was High Steward to the Earl of Leicester, and sources seem to show that his religion was never doubted. Hubaud's uncle Thomas was presented by the Throckmortons to the parish of Spennall in Warwickshire around 1588, indicating a continuing connection between the families.<sup>36</sup>

Tresham was fined heavily and imprisoned for many years during his lifetime for recusancy, but he never displayed militant behaviour, and frequently begged the queen for leniency, describing himself as her humble and loyal servant. In the mid-1580s a group of Midland Catholics made an impression on national politics and the Catholic community by drawing up a sophisticated proposal for Catholic freedom of conscience. The petition may have been written by Tresham, and was endorsed by Lord Vaux, Sir John Arundell and a layman from Rowington, William Skinner. It asked for a specific number of churches in every county to be allotted to those who preferred Catholic worship, and for anti-Catholic legislation to be dropped. As a token of their appreciation for this tolerance, each Catholic would pay a subsidy to the queen. The debate was in progress for five years, and the petition was signed by many leading Catholic

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<sup>35</sup> Ethan Shagan, 'Introduction', in Ethan Shagan (ed.), *Catholics and the Protestant Nation: Politics and Identity in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 15-16.

<sup>36</sup> Philip Styles (ed.). 'Parishes: Spennall, in A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 3, Barlichway Hundred', (London, 1945), pp. 172-174 <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/warks/vol3/pp172-174> [accessed 9 March 2015].

laymen around the country, again demonstrating an operative network of politically active Catholics.<sup>37</sup>

The fact that the layman, William Skinner, bore the brunt of the force of the law for his part in the petition, rather than the more prominent gentlemen of the Midlands, suggests that the status of the gentry was a more formidable obstacle. Job Throckmorton was commissioner for Warwickshire between 1583 and 1584, and wrote to Ralph Warcupp that he had apprehended Skinner, searched his home and examined its inhabitants as witnesses to Skinner's recusancy. Throckmorton believed there was enough evidence to bring him within the statutes, as Skinner had confessed his belief that Catholics should enjoy toleration, that Mary Stuart should be the heir apparent, and that he harboured Jesuits. Throckmorton wrote, 'If certain men near me were well wrung, there might happen to be wrung from them some evident matter of the service of her Majistie in the full discovery of Skynner and his adherents', whom Throckmorton named as Thomas Hunte of Bussheewood, Thomas Attwood of Rowington, Sir William the priest at Batsley, John Cooper of Rowington, and Dorothy his wife, Henry Hudsford, schoolmaster of Solihull, with his father and elder brother.<sup>38</sup> A letter the authorities intercepted en-route to Europe described the petition as unpopular among English Catholics.<sup>39</sup> The debate concerning this petition in the Commons recorded Francis Craddock of Stafford supporting the

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<sup>37</sup> The impact of this petition will be discussed further in chapter 7 of this dissertation. <sup>37</sup> J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1984), p. 148. The primary documentation of this case is held in the State Papers, SP 12/167, f.54, Job Throckmorton to Ralph Warcupp, 13 January 1584.

<sup>38</sup> SP 12/167, f.54, Job Throckmorton to Ralph Warcupp, 13 January 1584.

<sup>39</sup> CSPD, CCXVII, p. 238.

Act, but suggesting restraint on the clauses for family life, evidently believing that there were some areas where authorities ought not to meddle.<sup>40</sup>

The gentry Liggons family of Madresfield, Worcestershire, are an example of a diverse, yet integrated, Catholic family. Richard Liggons was responsible for the family, and he seems to have espoused a variety of social and political objectives. His younger brother, Ralph, served Mary Stuart and the Duke of Norfolk abroad from 1571, trying to garner continental support for her right to the throne. He had links with England from the continent, which suggests that he was actively fomenting support for the Queen of Scots in both England and Europe.<sup>41</sup> Another Liggons brother, Ferdinand, had expressed his wish for Elizabeth to take the throne in 1553 over her Catholic sister Mary. Another brother, Hugh, was recorded as a recusant from 1580, while yet another, Thomas, harboured priests.<sup>42</sup> The eldest brother, Richard, conformed and attended reformed services. He was high sheriff of Worcester in 1574, when the Privy Council ordered that Ralph return from the Low Countries, and he was sheriff again in 1585 when Ralph was trying to gain foreign support for Mary Stuart.<sup>43</sup> It is unclear whether Richard's conformity was genuine or simply assumed to protect his siblings through political influence, though if this was his intention it proved successful.

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<sup>40</sup> J.E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments Vol II 1584-1601* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969), pp. 281, 293-4).

<sup>41</sup> *Calendar of Manuscripts at Hatfield House*, H.M.C. IX/2, p. 84.

<sup>42</sup> D.E Williams, *The Lygons of Madresfield Court* (Logaston, 2001), pp. 8-9; W.L. Beauchamp, *The Madresfield Muniments* (The Echo Office: Worcester, 1928), p. 25; SP 53/14, f.54 2 September 1584, R. Liggons to Mary Queen of Scots.

<sup>43</sup> CSPD XCVIII, p. 1.

### 3.3 Violent Resistance

In other circumstances, the central government could themselves use the network against members whom they had reason to be suspicious of, or to instil fear of persecution into the community. An example of this is the case of John Somerville, whose strange outburst of hatred towards the queen and his loyalty to Catholicism, as well as Mary Stuart, had ruinous consequences for his kin. The story of Somerville and his father-in-law Edward Arden is complex and shadowy on account of the source material; nevertheless, it is prudent to offer a summary here.

In the autumn of 1583, John Somerville was twenty-three years old and had been head of the family since his father's death. The family estate was Edstone in the parish of Wootton Wawen, Warwickshire, about six miles from Stratford-upon-Avon. The impressive estate sat on 1,050 acres of land, but Somerville's father, who had died in 1578, had made an indenture that stated that his heir, John, would not legally attain his lands until he was twenty-four years old, and also that they should pass after John through the male line only. In the meantime, the land was held severally by the Earls of Leicester and Warwick, Sir William Catesby (father of Robert, the Gunpowder Plot conspirator), Francis Smith (a known 'church papist') and the queen as trustees, all of which demonstrates the network as well as the continuing Catholic role in society.<sup>44</sup> John Somerville married Margaret, daughter of Edward Arden of Park Hall, who had been elected Sheriff of Warwickshire in 1575, and was a known Catholic. The

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<sup>44</sup> Charlotte C. Stopes, *Shakespeare's Warwick Contemporaries* (rev. ed., Stratford-upon-Avon: Shakespeare Head, 1907), p. 70.



couple had two small girls by 1583.<sup>45</sup> We know very little about John Somerville leading up to his dabbling in treachery, except that he was educated at Hart Hall, Oxford, along with Francis Throckmorton and the Jesuit martyr Alexander Briant. Hart Hall, sometimes described as an 'academy of saints', was then known for its Catholic leanings, demonstrating a scholarly and isolated network.<sup>46</sup>

His family lands and connections with other wealthy Catholics in Warwickshire made Somerville a notable figure. There is little evidence of previous suspicious acts on his part; however, he was included on a list of recusants in the Diocese of Worcester in 1580, and perhaps because of this, or his connection to Edward Arden, he was not unknown to the Privy Council.<sup>47</sup> There is some evidence of conspiracy on the part of the authorities, who seem to have been keen to eliminate Edward Arden from local politics; Arden had fought Leicester's influence in Warwickshire for the previous twenty-years. Because of his connection to Arden and the Catholic community in Warwickshire, Somerville was a perfect victim, if the opportunity arose, for there was a good possibility of discrediting many others around him.<sup>48</sup> From what we know of Arden's soured relationships within local government, it may be that if Arden had been the original target, then the procedure would not have been too

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<sup>45</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (London: Norton and Company, 2004) p. 157.

<sup>46</sup> Richard Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 111. John Bossy wrote that Hart Hall was a 'Hotbed of Papists'. *Under the Molehill: An Elizabethan Spy Story* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 84; Stopes wrote that Somerville 'had been educated at Hart Hall, then a favourite College for Catholics in Oxford.' *Shakespeare's Warwick Contemporaries*, p. 70. Edwards wrote that Somerville was educated at that college, but did not mention its religious leanings. *Plots and Plotters in the Reign of Elizabeth I*, p. 75. Greenblatt wrote only that Somerville was educated at Oxford University. *Will in the World*, p. 157.

<sup>47</sup> LPL, CM IV, 'Recusants in the diocese of Worcester, 1580'.

<sup>48</sup> Edwards, *Plots and Plotters*, p. 75.

difficult. The course of action was to surgically remove him from county politics, using his refusal to abandon the Catholic faith. On the Privy Council sat not only the Earl of Leicester, a spiteful opponent of Arden, but also his brother, the Earl of Warwick, and Walsingham. In the county, Sir Thomas Lucy and other local officers flocked to Leicester on account of his regional influence. Sir Thomas Lucy, a justice of the peace and Member of Parliament for Warwickshire, was the omnipresent force in Warwickshire recusants' minds and homes. He organised a sweep of the county after Somerville's arrest, and Catholic-hunting had an obsessive hold over him. Lucy was a dangerous man to displease on account of his regional power. Stephen Greenblatt credits him as not a naturally cruel or treacherous man, but he was resilient in what he considered his God-given cause, and he was particularly interested in the Arden family and had a very poor relationship with Edward Arden.<sup>49</sup> Lucy cooperated with Wilkes in examining the Somerville and Arden families and in searching their homes.<sup>50</sup> He must have been aware from discussions with Wilkes that the Council desired a specific end and that he could benefit by providing it.

Edward Arden of Park Hall, near Birmingham, was a prominent Warwickshire gentleman, from a family of known Catholic tendencies. The Ardens had Catholic connections in the county because of their social position and faith, and Edward Arden had married Mary Throckmorton, daughter of Sir Robert and Muriel Throckmorton.<sup>51</sup> Arden inherited Park Hall from his grandfather in 1563 when he was about thirty years old, making him roughly the

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<sup>49</sup> Greenblatt, *Will in the World*, p. 160.

<sup>50</sup> SP 12/163, f.140, Thomas Wylkes to Burghley, Leicester, and Walsyngham, 7 November 1583.

<sup>51</sup> Stopes, *Shakespeare's Warwick Contemporaries*, p. 90.

same age as the queen, the Earl of Leicester and Sir Thomas Lucy.<sup>52</sup> Much of the information available about Arden, especially in relation to his son-in-law John Somerville, comes from Charlotte C. Stopes, who transcribed the *State Papers* relating to Arden and Somerville, and was known for her Shakespeare scholarship, among other colourful research and activities. Arden's answers to interrogations have been lost at some point, though the questions to be asked of him are in the *State Papers*. Edward Arden emerges less frequently from both the primary and secondary sources than Somerville, though this is probably because he is mainly known for his indirect involvement in the Somerville Plot. Omitting Arden from the larger picture of the plot is an oversight, however, as much of the evidence demonstrates that Arden, who had two powerful enemies in Sir Thomas Lucy and the Earl of Leicester, may have been the ultimate objective for the outcome of this exaggerated plot. When Somerville offered the opportunity, his foolish plot was inflated and he may have been sacrificed in order to eliminate Edward Arden. Therefore, Arden's involvement in the plot deserves more attention.

Arden was elected sheriff of Warwickshire in 1575, the same year that the queen stayed at Kenilworth Castle as Leicester's guest.<sup>53</sup> That he was selected as sheriff at this time, a choice made by the Council, suggests that Arden had not yet done anything to cross the queen or Council, but this changed soon enough with the Kenilworth festivities. Arden refused to attend any of the ceremonies Leicester arranged in honour of the queen. He could not plead time constraints, as Kenilworth was nearby and the celebrations lasted for seventeen days;

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

therefore, his absence was obviously a slight to Leicester, and therefore the queen. Stopes records that Arden refused to attend because he disapproved of Leicester's inappropriate relationship with Lettice Knollys, a married woman, plus his alleged sexual relationship with the queen and that he also would not wear the livery of a man 'noble only in two descents, both of them stained by the block'.<sup>54</sup> Stopes does not, however, mention in which document this statement can be found.

It is also pertinent to remember what Dugdale wrote about the feud between Arden and Leicester:

John Somerville, Esq., who in 25 Eliz. [1583], being a hot spirited Gentleman and about 23 years of age, but a Roman Catholic by profession, ... How far guilty of this, God knows; for with what a high hand things were then borne through the power of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester is not unknown to most men: which Earl had a particular spleen against Mr Arden of Park Hall, father-in-law of this Gentleman, as by sundry aged persons, of credit, I have often heard.<sup>55</sup>

This hatred may have been born during the Kenilworth affair, but surely it did not stop there. Stopes also mentions a land dispute recorded in the Star Chamber. In 1581, Edward Arden was plaintiff against several other men, probably his neighbours, who wanted to enclose some common land.<sup>56</sup> Apparently a lengthy trial ensued, but there is no mention of it in the *State Papers*. Perhaps no decision was necessary after Arden's ruin in 1583.

Somerville became agitated by the circumstances in which the English Catholics found themselves at some point before 1583. From Christmas 1582 to Easter 1583 he lived in Coventry. His friend there, Henry Goodere, a Member of Parliament, 'dyd often dissia[r] Someruyde and his wyffe to his house', where

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>55</sup> William Dugdale, *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (London: 1656), vol. 2, p. 830.

<sup>56</sup> Stopes, *Shakespeare's Warwick Contemporaries*, p. 92.

they spoke sentimentally of Mary Stuart, and Somerville bragged that she ‘gave him the bvttons of golde t[hat] he ware on his cape and dvblet’.<sup>57</sup> Somerville’s friendship with Goodere seems to have had a sinister edge, as the latter may have been repeating his discussions with Somerville to Burghley.<sup>58</sup> Somerville spoke to his father in law, Edward Arden, who said that ‘the Q[ueen] wold not svffa[r] the Catholicke Relegeon, & t[hat] she doth Execvte all good Catolickes’.<sup>59</sup> Somerville also conversed with Hugh Hall, a priest disguised as a gardener at Park Hall.<sup>60</sup>

At some point around the autumn of 1583, Somerville was moved to action and devised a plan against the queen’s life. The scheme cannot have been well developed, but he had convinced himself that he could be the one to rescue the English Catholics from religious persecution and Mary Stuart from her imprisonment. He had no chance of succeeding because he had no real plan and no organisation, just a thought that he had romanced into reality. He spoke to Sir John Conway, a relative of his wife, about ‘the trouble of his mynd about an intent he had to doe somewhat for the benefit of com[m]on wealth’, but Somerville confessed that he had not told Conway his direct intentions.<sup>61</sup> Upon hearing that Somerville was tormented with these thoughts, Conway advised Somerville to ‘laye theis conceits asyde’, but we cannot know if he suspected Somerville’s true

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<sup>57</sup> SP 12/163, f.16, Examination of John Somerfeld (or Somervyle) in the Tower, 6 Oct. 1583.

<sup>58</sup> Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare*, p. 109.

<sup>59</sup> SP 12/163, f.16, 6 October 1583, Examination of John Somerfeld (or Somervyle) in the Tower, 6 October 1583.

<sup>60</sup> Hall plays an important roll in Richard Wilson’s interpretation that legitimate plotters in his circle of connections were manipulating Somerville. Before moving to Park Hall, Hall had worked for the Catholic sympathizer, Sir Christopher Hatton, member of the Privy Council, in Lincolnshire, and Wilson argued that there Hall may have been ‘turned’. *Secret Shakespeare*, pp. 108-109.

<sup>61</sup> SP 12/163, f.67, Somerville’s answer to interrogatories, 31 October 1583.

intentions.<sup>62</sup> Two days before he set off for London to carry out this unrealistic plan of action, Somerville called for Hall the priest so that he could be confessed and take the sacrament, 'thinkyng therby that he should be now quiett in mynd'.<sup>63</sup> Hall refused, however, 'alleging that he was troubled w[ith] a sore legg and could not come as he desyred'.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps he did have an aching leg, but it is possible that Hall refused to come to Somerville because he knew of his intentions, Somerville not being overly secretive, and hoped to discourage him, or to distance himself from Somerville lest he be caught.

On 25 October 1583, Somerville left Wooton Wawen and set his plan in motion, unbeknownst to his family. He made it about thirty miles from Wooton Wawen, near the town of Aynho-on-the-Hill, Oxfordshire, where he meant to lodge for the night. At an inn, Somerville quickly attracted unwanted attention. Perhaps because he believed that his fellow lodgers were sympathetic to his cause, he revealed his plan to kill the queen.<sup>65</sup> Curiously, he appears to have shouted his intentions for all to hear, further confirmation of his unstable state of mind. On 28 October five men were examined regarding Somerville's speeches and conduct at the inn. They all had the same response; that Somerville's 'p[re]tensed purpose was to goe to London where he was in hope to se the Quenes Ma[jestie] and he ment to shoute her there w[ith] his dagg and hopt to se her head to be set vppon a pole for that she was a serpent and a viper'.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Wilson wrote that Somerville informed the lodgers at the inn of his plan because he saw them as accomplices. *Secret Shakespeare*, p. 106.

<sup>66</sup> SP 12/163, f.57, Examination of divers persons touching certain speeches against the queen, 28 October 1583.

This is where Somerville's case becomes more convoluted, as it is clear that he was mentally ill. This was immediately evident to those who apprehended and examined him. Lord Burghley reluctantly admitted as much in his *Execution of Justice* (1584), and Cardinal Allen referred to the fact in his *True Defense of English Catholics* (1584).<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, his confessions and intention were treated as seriously as if they had come from a sane, rational man. The *bona fide* evidence against Somerville was in the books he had read and the Agnus Dei he carried, but more importantly in his associations with Hugh Hall the priest and his father-in-law Edward Arden and his connection with Catholic networks across the county, indeed Thomas Wilkes wrote as much to the Privy Council:

The whole discouerie of this treason will rest altogether on Som[er]ville and hall; and of the Bookes and the Agnus dei in Som[er]villes wife and his sister whereuppon if anie other persones shalbe detected in this Countie.<sup>68</sup>

It is unclear if Somerville would have been treated as so significant if he had not behaved in such a wild and threatening manner. His own chief offence was sedition, to which his Catholicism was only secondary. If, as Wylkes reported, his treason was on books and material objects, and connected with his wife and sister, it is puzzling why Edward Arden was executed. The fact that he was known to be mentally ill seriously compromised the argument against him. The impact of the Somerville Plot was significant because of a combination of factors: family networks, the mood of the time, Somerville's mental illness, and the effect

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<sup>67</sup> William Wizeman, 'Somerville, John', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 51 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 616, and Stopes, *Shakespeare's Warwick Contemporaries*, p. 81.

<sup>68</sup> SP 12/163, 5.140, Thomas Wylkes to Burghley, Leicester and Walsingham, 7 November 1583.

of mistrust that an accusation of treason had on a community of both Catholics and Protestants.

A commission for Oyer and Terminer was issued on 5 November 1583. The original is in the *State Papers* and calls for the examination of Somerville's wife and sister, Arden and Hall the priest.<sup>69</sup> As previously mentioned, Arden's responses have disappeared, but the main questions put to him were in regard to Somerville, 'Whether did he [Somerville] make you privy to his repayre up to London and what was the cause there of?'<sup>70</sup> Arden was also asked if it had been Hall who had married his daughter to Somerville, and what speeches Hall had said against Leicester.<sup>71</sup> This seems an unworthy interrogation for a conspirator who was to pay with his life, but the mention of Leicester is conspicuous, as is the absence of the queen's name and speeches against her.

Arden was lodged in the Tower by 7 November 1583.<sup>72</sup> Sufficient documentation cannot be found to determine exactly when the others, Margaret Somerville, Elizabeth Somerville, Mary Arden and Hugh Hall, were brought to London as prisoners. As with Arden, the examinations of his wife, daughter and Hall the priest have not survived. It is possible that they were sent to someone for review and never returned to the clerk, as Stopes believed.<sup>73</sup> They might also have been deliberately destroyed.

Stopes copied the indictment into her book, but characteristically did not cite the reference, though it is not in the *State Papers*. From the passage that she

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<sup>69</sup> SP 12/163, f.129, Commission of Oyer and Terminer for the trial of Somerville, 5 November 1583.

<sup>70</sup> SP 12/163, f.127, Interrogatories to be ministered to Arden, 5 November 1583.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Stopes, *Shakespeare's Warwick Contemporaries*, p. 95.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.



quoted, however, we know that the prisoners (save Mary Somerville and Elizabeth Somerville, conspicuously and puzzlingly absent since Wilkes had deemed the latter a prime instigator) were indicted at Warwick on 2 December, though they were already in London.<sup>74</sup> An indictment issued on 9 December included the names of the jury in Warwickshire.<sup>75</sup> The prisoners were ordered to be brought to Guildhall to stand trial before the justices on 16 December, and Stopes quoted the Record of the Sessions:

John Somervyle, Edward Arden, Mary Arden, and Hugh Hall, being brought to the bar by the Lieutenant of the Tower, are severally arraigned. John Somervyle pleads guilty, Edward Arden, Mary Arden, and Hugh Hall plead not guilty. Venire from the county of Warwick awarded instanter. Verdict guilty. Judgment against the male prisoners and the female prisoner as is usual in cases of high treason. Execution on the 20th.<sup>76</sup>

After the trial the *State Papers* can once again shed light on the plot and those involved. It seems from letters and examinations that the evening after their trial, Edward Arden had dinner with his wife.<sup>77</sup> There is evidence from the *State Papers* that even at this point the couple thought that Mary Arden would be pardoned from execution. All of those involved with Somerville were convicted and sentenced to death, but reprieves were given to the women and to Hugh Hall before execution. It is possible that Hall was spared in order to brand him as responsible for confessing – either actually or allegedly – names of other Catholics in the county during his examination.<sup>78</sup> This would foster suspicion and mistrust of him, and also of other priests being harboured by Catholic laypeople. At his own execution, Edward Arden insisted that he was innocent of the acts of

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>77</sup> SP 12/164, f.81, Examination of John Neve, 20 December 1583.

<sup>78</sup> Edwards, *Plots and Plotters*, p. 76.

which he had been accused, except for his observance of the Catholic faith.<sup>79</sup> This is likely the truth of the matter. If there was a strong case against Arden, the disappearance of documents leaves the question irrefutable.<sup>80</sup>

Edward Arden could have been the target, and John Somerville just the pawn, for if Lucy had regional influence, then Leicester had national power. He was also one of the principal Protestants of the county, and antagonism between the two men had cost Arden the office of High Sheriff of Warwickshire.<sup>81</sup> It was natural that the bitter politics of Elizabethan Warwickshire divided along religious lines between Protestants – Dudleys, Lucys, Grevilles and Combs – and Catholics – Ardens, Catesbys, Grants, Somervilles and Throckmortons.<sup>82</sup> The whole legal process was quick and crooked. Glyn Perry's research shows that Arden's arrest and execution allowed Burghley and Leicester to lessen Christopher Hatton's Warwickshire influence, and justified the Bond of Association and subsequent ideological warfare.<sup>83</sup> This is a perfect demonstration of how networks operated.

### *3.4 Social and Religious Networks*

At times people drew on the network for neither political nor conspiratorial gains, but to support the religion of the community. Late in 1588 Walsingham demanded that Archbishop Whitgift examine one 'Bannister, a servant to Wrenford, of Worcestershire, he having never been to church in his life but refusing to confess that he heard Mass at his master's house'. Walsingham wrote

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76; Woods, *Shakespeare*, p. 93.

<sup>80</sup> For example, C. Stopes, *Shakespeare's Warwick Contemporaries*, p.107.

<sup>81</sup> Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare*, p. 111.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>83</sup> I am grateful to Glyn Perry for this information.

that the servant was privy to all of his master's dealings, and suggested that he be confined and examined, for information about Wrenford and his acquaintances.<sup>84</sup> Thomas Throckmorton wrote from Gloucester in 1594 that his brother Anthony had been informed that many Catholics heard Mass at the home of William Myners in Herefordshire on Sundays and holy days. This information was confirmed by Lewes Watkens while attending the Council of the Marches in Gloucester, who told Sir Thomas that as many people attended Catholic Mass as reformed service at Oldfield in the parish of Garway.<sup>85</sup> One 'Bussop of Woluered [Wolverton], hath Mass in his howse ordynarilie and Seminaries: And a Sonne that hath ben at Rome and is a prist'.<sup>86</sup> Ralph Sheldon was charged with continuously harbouring and inviting priests in his house to say Mass. Further suspicion was aroused by the fact that his sister had been to Louvain, though what she was doing there remains unclear. Thomas Lucy and John Harrington were ordered to search both Bishop's and Sheldon's houses.<sup>87</sup> Thomas Pearsall of Eccleshall, Staffordshire, 'an ancient man and a notable grand Papist', kept a seminary priest in his home to educate his children.<sup>88</sup> In Aldrudge, Staffordshire, Robert Gorway was accused of being 'a great seducer of the people thereabouts to popery and a very bad man of life and conversation, was vehemently

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<sup>84</sup> LPL, MS 3470, Fairhurst Papers, f.97r, Sir Francis Walsingham to Archbishop Whitgift, 2 December 1588.

<sup>85</sup> LPL, MS 3470, Fairhurst Papers, f. 139v, Sir Thomas Throckmorton to [?], 6 August 1594.

<sup>86</sup> SP 12/249, f.145, Names of sundry persons that are diversely charged, 16 August 1594.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Calendar of the manuscripts of the most Hon. the Marquis of Salisbury*, XVII, 1605, p. 642.

suspected to have in his house 2 or 3 of the persons who had a hand in this treacherous practice'.<sup>89</sup>

The network could also help Catholics even after they had been apprehended by the law. Anne Clarke, a widow from Herefordshire, was able to give 'by the helpe of my good frends' forty shillings 'in token of my obedience and loyaltie towards her Ma[jes]tie and to be discharged of all perservants and penalties of the lawe'.<sup>90</sup> Matthew Vaughan of Herefordshire did the same:

dutifully consyd[er]ing the clemency & favor of her most excellent Ma[jes]tie towards such as are w[ithin] the danger of penal laws for maters of conscience & recusancy [...] pressed my frynds to yealde to the yearly payment of fyue [five] marks <to her highness> for me, to be discharged of Shyryffe pursyuannts Informers & other ordinary inconueniences growing thereby.<sup>91</sup>

The creation of a network necessarily required loyalty to kin and community, as well as faith, as previously mentioned, but not necessarily to Catholic militancy, or indeed to all other Catholics. What Elizabeth wanted was loyalty to herself from her Catholic subjects, but some members of her Council could not accept that a Catholic could be loyal to both the state and Catholicism at the same time. The queen was naturally prepared to encourage and reward loyalty, especially among young priests who chose to serve in her new church, given the vulnerable state of her early reign.<sup>92</sup> Membership within the network involved loyalty to one's conscience, which often involved great sacrifice such as separation from friends and kin, and eventually financial ruin.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>90</sup> SP 12/189, f.2, Sir James Whytney and John Garnons, Justices of Herefordshire, 2 May 1586.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Alice Hogge, *God's Secret Agents: Queen Elizabeth's Forbidden Priests and the Hatching of the Gunpowder Plot* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005), p. 51.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

### 3.5 Patronage

A place in the patronage network was important for Catholic families if they wished to remain linked with the state for social and political advantages. This also benefitted the Protestant ruling class, for if Catholics were integrated and invested in English society, they were less likely to pose a threat to the regime. In early modern England, patronage was a social exercise that established rank in the social order, and was well practised amongst the gentry in local and national society. Patronage involved a network of clients and patrons that depended on ties of friendship and kinship. These connections were purpose built and cultivated by both patron and client.

Recent recusant research has found that Catholic gentry families bore a greater resemblance to their Protestant social counterparts than to the Catholic community of lesser social standing.<sup>94</sup> This was due to the gentry lifestyle, and those aspects of life which resembled one another in both religious camps, such as estate management, pedagogical instruction, and the petitioning of patrons – always a task carried out at higher social levels, but with an added sense of urgency among recusant gentry.<sup>95</sup> Patronage was used as a non-economic form of credit to maintain relationships outside of the kinship network.

The patron-client relationship among Catholic recusants and the conforming Protestant community has received less research than it deserves. Susan Cogan laments this fact but also leads the research in the field of patronage as a form of networking. How patronage relationships were

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<sup>94</sup> Susan Cogan, 'Reputation, Credit and Patronage: Throckmorton Men and Women, c.1560-1620', in Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott (eds.) *Catholic Gentry in English Society: The Throckmortons of Coughton from Reformation to Emancipation* (Farnham, Ashgate: 2009), pp. 69-70.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

constructed and maintained, and the recusants' ability to use the network has not been fully researched for the Midlands. Catholic men and women employed patronage relationships in order to manoeuvre through politically rocky ground. Women frequently used this to secure release or comfort of their imprisoned husbands.<sup>96</sup> Margaret Whorwood Throckmorton asked the Privy Council that her husband Thomas be allowed to plead 'his weightie cawses in law' at Westminster in May 1590.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, Muriel Tresham, wife of Thomas Tresham of Rushton Hall, Northamptonshire and daughter of Thomas Throckmorton of Coughton Court, acquired patronage and protection for her husband during his lengthy imprisonments in the 1580s and beyond. Muriel frequently wrote to Lord Burghley and his sons Robert and Thomas Cecil, petitioning for leniency for her husband. In March 1589 she wrote to Burghley requesting that her husband be moved from the bishop's prison at Ely to Banbury, 'for his health's sake', and to Thomas Cecil on the same day, asking him to intercede with his father to grant her request.<sup>98</sup> Apart from being better for his health, Banbury was also much closer to his home in Northamptonshire than Ely. In May 1589 Anne Catesby petitioned her patron, Archbishop Whitgift, much in the same way, asking that her husband be allowed leave from prison to visit his mother, who was 'dangerously ill'.<sup>99</sup> Again in 1599 Muriel Tresham appealed for support from her patrons; this time she wrote to Lady Egerton to ask if her husband, Viscount Brackley, who was at that time Lord Chancellor, might help Thomas Tresham,

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>97</sup> APC, vol. 19, p. 102.

<sup>98</sup> HMC *Various iii*, p. 109; BL, Tresham Papers, Add MS 39828, fol. 137.

<sup>99</sup> LPL, Fairhurst Papers, 3470, f.112.

who was then imprisoned over a disputed debt rather than recusancy.<sup>100</sup> Lady Egerton, was born Alice Spencer and raised at Althorp, Northamptonshire, eighteen miles from Rushton. Muriel Tresham used the network, but also added to it by reaching out to Protestant neighbours and patrons.

From the archive of her letters held at the British Library, Muriel Tresham seems to have been one of the most industrious women in the Catholic and recusant patronage network, though it should be kept in mind that her letters have been preserved while others may have been lost or destroyed.<sup>101</sup> As demonstrated above, Muriel regularly wrote to diverse men and women to appeal for assistance and support of her often-imprisoned husband. What is less clear is who the mouthpiece of the letters was, as much of Muriel's correspondence was drafted by her husband Thomas, even if he was in prison, as is clear from the collection of Tresham Papers. This indicated that the family's approach to garner patronage was to have both husband and wife cast a wide net by contacting various patrons.

Even after Thomas's death in 1605, Muriel continued to correspond with her network of patrons, especially Robert Cecil.<sup>102</sup> Maintaining patronage associations became all the more imperative once a recusant woman was widowed, as her legal standing as a widow rather than a wife was altered. As a widow, a recusant woman could be lawfully accountable for non-attendance at Sunday services. Muriel Tresham wrote to Robert Cecil in March 1609 to protest how she was treated by John Lambech, proctor of Northampton. Muriel complained that regardless of her frail age, the proctor 'continually laboureth to

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<sup>100</sup> BL, Tresham Papers, MS 39829, f. 35, 36.

<sup>101</sup> Cogan, 'Reputation, Credit and Patronage', p. 89.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

have me presented Spirituall Court, & to be indighted at each sessions & assises.’<sup>103</sup> Muriel believed that Lambert’s hostile pursuit of an elderly Catholic widow was due less to her recusancy, ‘I am greatlie stepped into years & seldome goo from home’, and more an attempt to appropriate her lands for his own gain.<sup>104</sup>

Thomas Tresham’s younger brother, William, enjoyed the patronage of Sir Christopher Hatton, who acquired for William an allowance through serving the court as one of the Queen’s Gentlemen Pensioners. By 1582, however, Leicester was unimpressed by William’s relationship with Spanish Ambassador Mendoza, and William fled to France, where he remained until the queen’s death.<sup>105</sup> The patronage that Hatton offered William had not gone unnoticed by Thomas Tresham, who wrote to Hatton that William ought to be grateful:

that of a thrall prisoner delivered him a freed subject, that of a countryman procured him a settled courtier; that of a person disgraced restored him into her Majesty’s good favour; yea, that bestowed on him forth of your coffers your own office of a pensioners room.<sup>106</sup>

Robert Brooksby, father to Edward who married Eleanor Vaux of Harrowden, maintained a patron-client association with the Protestant and Puritan Hastings family, headed by the third and fourth earls of Huntingdon.<sup>107</sup> This, along with Margaret Whorwood and Muriel Tresham’s patronage relationships, suggest that a Catholic client would not necessarily discourage a Protestant patron from offering support. What seems to have been more

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<sup>103</sup> SP 14/144, f. 100, Lady Tresham to Salisbury, 20 March 1609.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*; Cogan, ‘Reputation, Credit and Patronage’, p. 90.

<sup>105</sup> Mary E. Finch, *The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families, 1540-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the Northamptonshire Record Society, 1956), p. 78.

<sup>106</sup> HMC *Various*. Iii, p. 23.

<sup>107</sup> Cogan, ‘Reputation, Credit and Patronage’, p. 90.



important was that the client's social credit was well founded. The endeavours of Midland Catholics to establish and conserve independent and household capital allowed them to participate in a network of patronage that enabled them to manoeuvre through the anti-Catholic legislations.<sup>108</sup>

Patron-client relationships could reinforce existing kinship ties. Sir Richard Verney was petitioned for patronage by Elizabeth Vaux, who held wardship over his niece: 'you shall so farre bynd me & myne unto you that if euer it lye in my powar thowgh it be with the hassard of my estate I will requite this kindnis'.<sup>109</sup> The executed Warwickshire man John Somerville's two daughters petitioned Sir Henry Goodere, their kinsman, in the early seventeenth century to assist them in regaining possession of family lands that the crown had confiscated in 1583, after Somerville's arrest.<sup>110</sup> Similarly, a patron's benefits could trickle down to his clients' own network, as was the case with Thomas Tresham and his clientage with the Cecil family. When Thomas Tresham petitioned the queen and Privy Council for tolerance in the interests of Midlands Catholics, he put himself in the position of patron to all Midlands Catholics. He wrote to Burghley in 1588:

[I] most humblye beseech [you] ... that my Innocencie, and loyalty maye be ever sheltered under your honourable protection .... [family is] dewlie bound reverence your hono[u]r, not onlie a most excellent magistrate of his common wealthe, but as a special Patron of me in what I esteeme dearest.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Cogan, 'Reputation, Credit and Patronage', p. 90.

<sup>109</sup> SP 14/216/2, f.178, Elizabeth Vaux to Sir Rich. Verney, Sheriff of Warwickshire, [November 10?] 1605.

<sup>110</sup> CSPD, 1603-1601, p. 221; HMCS col 24, p. 19.

<sup>111</sup> SP 12/219, f.138, Sir Tho. Tresame to Lord Burghley, 31 December 1588.

### 3.6 Women

The influence of Catholic and recusant women on the network, especially the underground network, deserves special and separate mention on account of their distinct impact. Recusant women are perhaps the best documented of any female group in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Even so, any available documentation is bound to reveal those women who were capable of making an impact on the Protestant authorities. These women were no doubt a minority among the rest of the female recusant community. However, as Marie B. Rowlands has argued, 'A study of this special group of the committed nevertheless reveals something of the attitudes of the state and of the Roman Catholic Church to women in general'.<sup>112</sup> Given that recusants generally tried to keep beneath the radar, it is evident why the role of women might be particularly crucial to its survival. The circumstances of Catholic women naturally differed to that of non-Catholic women in regard to religious practice, but apart from this major issue, the duties of a woman may not have differed significantly between Catholic and Protestant.

Recusant women, with their lower social status, faced different punishments than their male recusant counterparts. Ironically, this difference could work to their advantage. Married women, who lacked legal autonomy, could therefore enjoy a certain amount of anonymity thanks to their status. The Elizabethan Settlement required each individual, including women, to attend the Book of Common Prayer service on Sundays and holy days. The penalty, initially a fine of 12d, was handled by the justices of the peace, as proxy for the Privy

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<sup>112</sup> Marie B. Rowlands, 'Recusant Women 1560-1640', in Mary Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society 1500-1800* (Methuen: London, 1985), p. 149.

Council, but also by the Ecclesiastical Commissions; thus both civil and church authorities were involved in the suppression of recusancy, even though a recusant could be punished for an offence only by one court.<sup>113</sup> Lists of those who refused to attend church were eventually recorded in the Exchequer, first into the Pipe Rolls in 1581, and then into a new category of records created especially for non-conformists, in the 1593 Recusant Rolls. Single women – widows and a few independent unmarried women – are frequently recorded in these lists, and could potentially hold positions of power. In about 1584 Elizabeth Shirley took charge of her Catholic brother's estate at Staunton Harold, Leicestershire at just twenty years of age, and kept this position until Sir George married. Elizabeth had been raised Protestant, and initially resisted her brother's efforts to convert her, though certain events such as poor health and her unwillingness to marry eventually persuaded her to enter a convent, and she became an Augustinian nun at St Ursula's in Louvain on 10 September 1596.<sup>114</sup> Married women who recused themselves from church services are absent from these particular lists, as they had few legal rights outside the marital confines, whereas unmarried adult women and widows were legally responsible for their own actions and therefore could be punished for recusancy with indictments, fines and imprisonment.<sup>115</sup> Married recusant women caused consternation among authorities because they could not easily be punished by normal means. On the one hand, a husband was not responsible for the criminal acts of his wife,

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<sup>113</sup> Hugh Bowler, *Recusant Rolls II*, Catholic Record Society, Records Series vol. 57, 1965, p. xii.

<sup>114</sup> Claire Walker, 'Shirley, Elizabeth (1564/5-1641)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/45824>, accessed 14 March 2015].

<sup>115</sup> Rowlands, 'Recusant Women', p. 150.

but on the other, social norms held to the conviction that the enforcement of proper religious behaviour within the family was the task of the patriarch.<sup>116</sup>

Within female networks the concept of 'kinswomen' features prominently and seems to have strengthened the religious aspect of the network, but also worked independently from it and in a social context. In 1557 Lady Anne Neville chose to live with her daughter Agnes Brudenell after the death of her second husband, Sir Anthony Neville, at the Brudenell estate of Deene. Agnes and her husband Edmund quarrelled over religion, she being a Protestant and he at least sympathetic to conservative religion. Anne Topcliffe Brudenell, Agnes's cousin and sister-in-law, spent much time in Agnes's company, in much the same way that Catholic women's social networks functioned, and also demonstrates the fluidity of women within the networks.<sup>117</sup> Like Agnes and Anne, Muriel Tresham retained a relationship with her Throckmorton sisters, her natal daughters and her daughter-in-law, Anne Tufton. Being like her husband a prominent lay Catholic leader, Muriel seems to have nurtured a maternal network among Catholic women.<sup>118</sup> Even after Catholic movement was restricted in 1593 Catholic women managed to care for and spend time with each other. Muriel Tresham's daughters maintained bonds, even though they were separated geographically after marriage. The Tresham sisters Lady Elizabeth Monteagle and Catherine Webb called on their sister Lady Francis Staunton in 1601.<sup>119</sup> The Tresham and Vaux women would have had little difficulty sustaining their own

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<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Joan Wake, *The Brudenells of Deene* (London: Carriel and Company, 1953), p. 71.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>119</sup> HMC, 110-111; Cogan, 'Catholic Gentry, Family Networks and Patronage', p. 133.

network, considering the closeness of the family homes, with about ten miles separating Rushton and Deene.<sup>120</sup> This type of close familial network also offered protection to women in need. For example Thomas Tresham's great-aunt Clemence retreated to Rushton after she was displaced as a nun at Syon Abbey, and she remained there until her death in 1567.<sup>121</sup> Mary Arden moved back to her family home of Coughton Court at some point following the execution of her husband, Edward Arden, in 1583.<sup>122</sup>

A clause aimed at controlling recusant wives was not initiated until 1581, when they were included in the 'Act to retain the Queen's Majesty's subjects in their true obedience'.<sup>123</sup> This Act finally put the responsibility for controlling recusant wives into the hands of the county justices of the peace.<sup>124</sup> There was still little that could be done legally against them, however. Wives could be indicted and convicted, but still could not be fined, nor made to forfeit lands or possessions, since, legally, they owned neither during their husbands' lifetime.<sup>125</sup> After her husband's death, a recusant widow could have two-thirds of her jointure seized, and the Recusant Rolls of 1593/94 record sixty such seizures

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<sup>120</sup> Cogan, 'Catholic Gentry, Family Networks and Patronage', p. 133.

<sup>121</sup> Audrey Butler, 'Clemence Tresham of Rushton and Syon,' in *Northants Past and Present* 5 (1974), pp. 91-93; Virginia R. Bainbridge, 'Syon Abbey: Women and Learning, c. 1415-1600, in E.A. Jones and Alexandra Walsham (eds.), *Syon Abbey and its Books: reading, writing and religion, c. 1400-1700* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2010), p. 102.

<sup>122</sup> SP 12/243, f.202, Book containing the Second Certificates of the Commissioners to the County of Warwick to the Council, November [?] 1592.

<sup>123</sup> 23 Eliz., c.1 (1581).

<sup>124</sup> John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 154; Rowlands, 'Recusant Women', p. 151.

<sup>125</sup> Rowlands, 'Recusant Women', p. 152.

among 450.<sup>126</sup> While this punishment must have been perceived as harsh, fines could not suppress religious non-conformity, and this was clear to the Council.<sup>127</sup>

The evidence in both the civil and ecclesiastical records implies that recusant women frequently evaded punishment by the authorities. Mrs Hancorne retreated from her parish in Warwickshire when she was meant to be presented, while Margaret Attwood of Rowington moved from parish to parish in the same county.<sup>128</sup> Authorities heard in 1592 that Bridget Strange of Gloucestershire had not been to church in three decades, and when she caught wind that pursuivants were coming to search her Warwickshire house she left with the altar vessels and vestments she kept for Masses in her home; 'she fled from the said howse and carried with her certen popish church stuff'.<sup>129</sup>

Evidently the Obedience Act of 1581 did not have the desired effect on Recusant women, for a further Act was passed in 1586, attempting to clarify the 1581 procedures against Recusants.<sup>130</sup> Why authorities could not resolve the problem of recusant women, when they evidently recognised their influence, is unclear, but may be based in the social tradition of the family hierarchy. By the early 1590s it was obvious even to the most senior administrators, for example Lord Burghley, that the influence of recusant wives resulted 'in respect that by their example whole families refuse to resort to church and continue in

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*; Bowler, *Recusant Rolls II*, p. xxxiv.

<sup>127</sup> Rowlands, 'Recusant Women', p. 152.

<sup>128</sup> Michael Hodgetts, 'A Certificate of Warwickshire Recusants 1592', *Worcester Recusant V* (1965), pt 1, p. 31.

<sup>129</sup> CRS, A.G. Petti (ed.), *Recusant Documents from Ellesmere Manuscripts*, LX (1968), pp. 74, 87.

<sup>130</sup> 28 Eliz., c.5 (1586), 'Act for the more speedy execution of certain branches of the stature made in the 23<sup>rd</sup> year of the Queen Majesty's reign'.

recusancy'.<sup>131</sup> For example, Thomas Tresham was a prolific letter writer, even while he was under house arrest in London. He sent letter drafts to Muriel Tresham in Northamptonshire, and she copied and sent the full letter to the intended recipient. Many of these are kept with the Tresham Papers in the British Library. During house arrest, women took the reins of the family and kept the network alive by writing letters and petitions.

While Catholic women attempted to evade the authorities, the shape of the network is most visible when they run into trouble from the law. Shortly after the Throckmorton Plot, pursuivants raided Throckmorton House in London while Mass was being said. Because of this we know that Margery Throckmorton was in attendance along with other women such as her daughters Mary and Anne, and her daughter-in-law Frances.<sup>132</sup> In similar fashion, the centre of Muriel Tresham's network comes into view with the repercussions of Essex's rebellion of 1600, when the Tresham women including Muriel and her daughters Mary, Elizabeth and Frances, and Muriel's daughter-in-law Anne hurried to petition patrons who could protect Francis Tresham for his involvement in the rebellion.<sup>133</sup> Perhaps the most significant example of this, however, is the uncovering of Anne Vaux's and Eleanor Brooksby's network, which covered a massive geographical area within and without the Midlands. This included the radical families of Beaumont of Leicestershire, Catesbys of Warwickshire, Digbys of Rutland, Treshams of Northamptonshire and the Wintours of

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<sup>131</sup> APC, XXIII, 1592, p. 193.

<sup>132</sup> SP 12/167, f.144, Extracts of the chief points contained in the examinations of sundry persons committed for religion and other causes, January [?] 1584.

<sup>133</sup> SP 14/216, f.141, Examination of Fras. Swetnam, baker to Mrs Vaux, 13 November 1605; Godfrey Anstruther, *Vaux of Harrowden: A Recusant Family* (Newport: R.H. John's Limited, 1953), pp. 247, 287, 312; Cogan, 'Catholic Gentry, Family Networks and Patronage', pp. 135, 136.

Worcestershire.<sup>134</sup> Much past research has been devoted to Anne and Eleanor's impact on and part in the Gunpowder Plot.<sup>135</sup>

Eventually, by the early 1590s, local authorities were being ordered to indict and imprison recusant women, especially women of higher social standing. In the Midlands six gentlewomen in Northamptonshire were arrested.<sup>136</sup> The Privy Council wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1592 recommending that 'restraint of such principall gentlewomen, wives, widowes and others as have ben found to be obstinate Recusantes' be practised.<sup>137</sup> Notable women such as Margaret Throckmorton, were put into the 'protection' of Protestant authorities, in this case the custody of the Dean of Gloucester.<sup>138</sup> Similarly, Lady Constance Foljambe, of Tupton Derbyshire, was put into the care of her Protestant grandson, Godfrey Foljambe, in 1587.<sup>139</sup> John Coke, rector of North Wingfield, complained of the 'evil effect' Constance's release would have, and wrote a letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury, who seems to have had a role in this case. Coke's anxiety was the influence she would have on the members of the community who had been attending Sunday services since her incarceration.<sup>140</sup> She seems to have been put into her grandson's zealous and reforming care on account of her 'great age', and the Council ordered her release from his management twenty months later, though he retained her 'living, goods and chattles.' She was keen

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<sup>134</sup> Cogan, 'Catholic Gentry, Family Networks and Patronage', p. 137.

<sup>135</sup> For a recent example, see Jessie Childs, *God's Traitors: Terror and Faith in Elizabethan England* (London: The Bodley Head, 2014).

<sup>136</sup> CSPD, CCXI, p. 108.

<sup>137</sup> APC, XI, 1592-3, p. 9.

<sup>138</sup> APC, XXIV, 1592-3, pp. 279-280.

<sup>139</sup> LPL, MS 3204, f.121.

<sup>140</sup> LPL, MS 710, f.19.



upon her release to conform and retain her freedom, as an entry in a commonplace book written by Roger Columbello makes this interesting note:

Mem. Godfrey Foljambe of More Hall, myself, my brother Blunt were at Tupton in the Lady Constance Foljambe's house, the 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1589, when all the morning prayers, saving the ij lessons omitted for want of a byble and the collect for the day for want of skylle to find out, was distinctly read with the Latinne also by Nicholas Harding; hir man servant, and Elianor Harrington, hir waytinge woman being present, who reverently and obediently behaved themselves during all the service tyme...<sup>141</sup>

Free women also ventured inside prisons to help and comfort incarcerated recusants and priests. Inquiries into Dorothy Pauncefoot of Hasfield Gloucestershire showed that:

she hath daily access and Recourse unto such as do lye in prison for recusancye; and so hath used of longe tyme And them dothe maynteyne, and of them doth Receaue newes and desclothe the same to them that conveyeth the lyke beyond seas.<sup>142</sup>

Dorothy had herself been imprisoned at Newgate in 1585 for recusancy, and her husband, John, had fled to Rouen. She was believed to support a network of letter carriers between Gloucester and France, and to be acquainted with Thomas Alfield, a seminary priest from Gloucestershire, who was imprisoned in Newgate between 1582 and 1585, ending with his execution.<sup>143</sup>

The names and positions of recusant women are not difficult to trace, especially of unmarried or widowed recusants, for they appear in commissioners reports and later the Pipe and Recusant Rolls. What is more impenetrable is evidence of the network created and maintained by recusant women, either as

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<sup>141</sup> BL, Add MS 6702, f.20. The Godfrey Foljambe mentioned in this document is not the same as Lady Constance's grandson.

<sup>142</sup> SP 12/230, f.61, Articles of misdemeanor or objected against Mrs Dorothy Pauncefoote for matters of recusancy, January 1590.

<sup>143</sup> SP 12/167, f.81, John Weble, Mayor, and the Aldermen of Gloucester, to Sir Fr. Walsyngham, 16 January 1584.

spiritual guides within the home, priest harbourers, or exiled nuns. Women's roles in the religious network have recently been appreciated by Susan Cogan, who argued that it was in their capacity to construct networks of protection with other Catholic families, specifically for the protection and benefit of their male relations who would feel the blunt force of the law for non-conformity. Cogan suggests that this role of recusant women has been overlooked in post-Reformation scholarship, despite its relevance.<sup>144</sup> Perhaps an exception to this is the plentiful research on Margaret Clitherow, and her relationship to Elizabethan Catholics, during her life and after her death.<sup>145</sup>

The most obvious, and arguably most influential, aspect in which recusant women involved themselves in the maintenance of the network was through the harbouring of missionary priests. This illegal activity was often taken up by women, and a statute of 1585 stated that all who harboured a Jesuit or missionary priest, male or female, had committed a capital felony.<sup>146</sup> Catholic hagiography of the period was engrossed with female priest harbourers; William Weston and John Gerard write at length of them, and women martyrs, such as Margaret Clitherow and Anne Line, had early hagiographical accounts written about them leading up to Catholic Emancipation.<sup>147</sup> The two most famous priest harbourers were undoubtedly Anne Vaux and Eleanor Brooksby, daughters of Lord Vaux of Harrowden, Northamptonshire. The pair used their wealth to rent property in the Midlands, such as Baddesley Clinton in Warwickshire, and White

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<sup>144</sup> Cogan, 'Reputation, Credit and Patronage', p. 70.

<sup>145</sup> See Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Trials of Margaret Clitherow Persecution, Martyrdom and the Politics of Sanctity in Elizabethan England* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

<sup>146</sup> 27 Eliz., c.2 (1585).

<sup>147</sup> John Mush, *Life and Death of Margaret Clitherow, the Martyr of York*, (Richardson, 1849).

Webbs, in Enfield Chase, closer to London. In doing so, the sisters provided safe houses for missionary priests and members of the recusant community, but their involvement in the community and network goes beyond offering protection. Anne was at Coughton Court in the period leading up to the Gunpowder Plot, and organised the Midland pilgrimage to Holywell, Wales, earlier in the year. It has been suggested that it was Anne Vaux who wrote the Monteagle Letter, alerting King James and the Privy Council to the threat but this suggestion is based on supposed similarity between her own handwriting and the disguised handwriting of the letter. Historians generally agree that this theory lacks credibility.<sup>148</sup>

The sisters made a formidable duo. Eleanor, the eldest daughter of Lord Vaux, was born in 1560. She, like her siblings, was educated at Harrowden under Edward Campion. She married Edward Brooksby of Shoby, Leicestershire in 1577, and the couple harboured missionary priests, most notably Robert Persons, and they kept a secret press at their home in East Ham, Essex. Edward died in 1581, and Eleanor remained a widow, living with Anne who remained unmarried. Anne often impersonated Eleanor during threats and raids by pursuivants, as Eleanor was the mistress of the houses the sisters rented, but timid in nature. Anne herself was devoted to the Jesuit Henry Garnet. She assumed the alias Mrs Perkins and the two stayed at a house in Wandsworth, and there and at White Webbs in Essex they were visited by Francis Tresham, her 'cousin german removed', the last person to be admitted into the group of

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<sup>148</sup> Mark Nichols, *Investigating the Gunpowder Plot* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), p. 214.

Gunpowder plotters.<sup>149</sup> Anne was suspicious of what the group was up to, and claimed during interrogations that she 'feared these wild heads had something in hand, and prayed him [Garnet] for God's sake to talke with Mr Catesbye and to hinder any thinge that possibly he might'.<sup>150</sup>

Anne Vaux was at Coughton Court in October and November of 1605. She was arrested after the Gunpowder Plot, but released on Lewes Pickering's bond. She helped to hide Garnet at Hindlip Hall, Worcestershire, the home of Thomas Habington, until he was discovered on 25 January 1606 and imprisoned at the Tower of London. Anne followed Garnet to London, but was arrested after Garnet's gaoler discovered invisible ink in her letters to him. She protested innocence to the conspiracy of men who frequently visited Garnet at her residence and was released after Garnet's execution. Eleanor and Anne were instrumental in the underground network that aided and hid priests. They devoted their lives to this task, and utilised the privilege of their family connections to help in the task of funding the Jesuit mission.<sup>151</sup>

### 3.7 Clerical Networks

The network of Catholic priests was a link between and overlapped with other parts of the network. The establishment of a clerical network allowed Catholic families with access to a priest to practice a religion that was more elaborate

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<sup>149</sup> SP 14/216, f.212, Examination of Anne Vaux, 24 March 1606.

<sup>150</sup> SP 14/216, f.139, Examination of Anne Vaux, 11 March 1606.

<sup>151</sup> Colleen M. Seguin, 'Brooksby, Eleanor (c.1560–1625)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/69032>, accessed 14 Aug 2013]; Mark Nicholls, 'Vaux, Anne (bap. 1562, d. in or after 1637)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28159>, accessed 14 Aug 2013].

than simply receiving the sacraments and participating in liturgical rites. The importance of the network between clergy and family cannot be overlooked, for priests frequently travelled within England and abroad, and could potentially have connections with Catholics at various social levels, and even incarcerated Catholics. Thomas More, a Marian priest, was still roaming Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Herefordshire in 1582.<sup>152</sup> Of course this is not peculiar to the Midlands; similar occurrences took place in Lancashire, an area with a higher proportion of Catholics, and as well as in Sussex, where there were fewer non-conformists.<sup>153</sup> The religious experience of Midland Catholics was in many ways similar to those of the rest of the country, and a functional network allowed England's Catholics a sense of shared identity. Certain experiences, for example, imprisonment, fines, religious rather than political persecution, and a comparison with the persecuted early Christians, were similarly recorded throughout the country, and it was the network that kept the polemical debate organised among the community.<sup>154</sup>

Priests frequently lived in or visited Catholic gentry houses, and so these gentry families – and perhaps their network and servants – had frequent access to the celebration of Mass and the other sacraments.<sup>155</sup> In 1584, Lady Throckmorton, wife of Sir John Throckmorton and mother of the recently executed Francis Throckmorton, had enough religious support from various recusant priests that she was able to send one away to Rome, as mentioned in

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<sup>152</sup> SP 12/156, f.46, Bishop Whitgyft to Walsingham, 24 December 1582.

<sup>153</sup> Sena, 'Networks', p. 57.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> Marie B. Rowlands found that, in general, recusant gentry women '...catechized their servants daily and taught neighbours and tenants' children the Pater, the Creed and the Commandments of God and the Church.' 'Recusant Women 1560-1640', p. 165.

the previous chapter. His purpose was to retrieve 'l[ett]res to the said Ladie from her... sonne Thom[a]s', and relics that were 'certen heare [hair] & Bones w[hich] the said morgan [the priest] tould the said Ladie <Throckm[or]ton> were the heare of our Ladie & bones of martirs.'<sup>156</sup> Ralph Sheldon was charged in 1594 for having 'Mass in his howse And resorte of Priestes: A priest kept allwaies in his howse.'<sup>157</sup> Richard Topcliff wrote to the Earl of Shrewsbury in 1590, and after a dose of flattery begged the Earl to open his eyes to the network of priests who supported the Catholic community in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire:

Let me remember yo[re] Lo: that yo[u] are a prynce alone (in effect) in too cuntrees in the hart of England more danngeroosly infected than the worst of England of my knowledge: There and every where els Badd weeds will seeke to shrowde them selfs vnder great Oaks whose pollicees (I trust) yo[re] Lo will deserue now. [...] Lowerr And Badd men can not hyde where they receave comforte, nether will God suffer the practices of the wicked to lye hidden as laytly hathe [burst?] ovt the lewde dispositions of that danndgeroos familie of the fytzharberts in y[is] countree.<sup>158</sup>

Priests were viewed as especially untrustworthy because of their foreign connections, and thus any information that could be collected of them engaging in conspiracies was sought by authorities. Even so, older members of these families must have felt detached from medieval Catholicism.

### *3.8 Conclusion*

We ought not to view the above as proof that any Catholic engaged in the network, or even in the network of political resistance, was therefore open to violent and forceful action on behalf of the Catholic cause. Rather, Catholics could

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<sup>156</sup> SP 12/173/1, f.40, Hugh Cholmondeley to Francis Walsingham, 25 September 1584.

<sup>157</sup> SP 12/249, f.145, Names of charged Catholics, 16 August 1594.

<sup>158</sup> LPL, MS 3199, f. 215v, 'Richard Topcliff to the Earl of Shrewsbury', 8 December 1590.

demonstrate peaceful political resistance by opposing policies and harsh enforcement of the anti-Catholic laws. The picture of county Catholicism that emerges from this study is not one of isolation, either self imposed by the Catholics themselves or politically imposed upon them. Previous studies have shown that early modern people were connected with numerous groups at any particular time; groups which could change over the course of years.<sup>159</sup> Therefore, it is not only difficult but also unwise to construct a 'typical' model of community, as it was constantly in flux and was naturally changeable among individuals, counties and with time. Catholics were not confined to the margins because of their religion with its sacraments, fasts and feasts, nor were they forced underground or into obscurity. They used, through the network, subtle but effective methods of political resistance, and the fact that the authorities sought to infiltrate the network with their own agents is proof of its effectiveness. Not all Catholics, nor all recusants, can be lumped together in the same political category. We should view Elizabethan Catholics more as they viewed themselves: as members of a wider English community, and generally with pliable convictions within their Catholic faith. Catholics practiced strategies that assimilated themselves within the larger community. They may have seen themselves as persecuted, but the evidence does not suggest that they saw themselves as anything but integrated members of English society. This was as true of Midlands Catholics as it was of recusants elsewhere in the country.

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<sup>159</sup> Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington, 'Introduction: Communities in Early Modern England', in Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington, *Communities in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 5.

#### 4. The Evolution of the State's Response to Recusancy

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The Acts of Uniformity and Supremacy passed in 1559 officially identified English worship with the Book of Common Prayer and, in theory, declared Elizabeth I to be the source of ecclesiastical authority within the realm.<sup>1</sup> In practise, Elizabeth's role in the church was not clear; she was made Supreme Governor, but this left the question of ecclesiastical authority ambiguous, which at times offered opportunities for Catholics to manoeuvre around the anti-Catholic laws. These acts, known to historians as the Religious Settlement, naturally had a direct impact on each of the queen's subjects. Failure to comply with the new laws and refusal to attend reformed services on Sundays and holy days resulted in monetary fines, a penalty which was increased as the reign progressed. Eager to establish and maintain political and social stability during a precarious transition, the new queen and her Council were reluctant to antagonise too openly those who disagreed with the change in national religion.<sup>2</sup> The initially cautious treatment of the country's Catholics, who probably formed the majority of the population at the beginning of the reign, and the subsequent force used on the community from the 1580s onwards were arguably direct reflections of the state's fear of the religious circumstances.<sup>3</sup> In theory the state

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Eliz. I c.1, c.2 (1559).

<sup>2</sup> See Norman Jones, 'Elizabeth's First Year', in Christopher Haigh (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1984), pp. 27-53.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Haigh, 'From Monopoly to Minority: Catholicism in early modern England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5<sup>th</sup> ser, (1981), pp. 129-47;



opposed Catholicism, but there were both practical difficulties and political dangers to overcome, which meant that persecution varied in its intensity and effectiveness. Furthermore, Elizabeth was adamant that she opposed Catholicism on the grounds of its allegiance to a foreign power, not its doctrine, which seemed to offer possibilities for Catholic loyalism. This chapter aims to analyse the impact of the state's response on Midland Catholics, assessing the degree to which the state was able to implement changes and if they were accepted, as well as examining how the ambiguities of the situation offered intermittent refuge to Catholics.

#### *4.1 The Religious Settlement and Anti-Catholic Laws*

Conformity and non-conformity were complicated scenarios and the religious situation in England was not as black and white as 'Catholic' versus 'Protestant'. Terms such as Catholic, recusant, church papist and conservative ought not to be regarded as synonymous, even if distinguishing between them is not straightforward. Not all Catholics were recusants; indeed, not all recusants were Catholic, as Puritans could be recorded on the Recusant Rolls. The term 'Catholic' is used often in this dissertation to incorporate all those who wished to keep with the old faith to varying degrees. The word 'recusant' is straightforward, though the people that subscribed to it were not always so. Recusancy was a

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Peter Marshall, *Reformation England 1480-1642* (London: Hodder Education, 2003), p. 145.

legal category that defined dissenters who refused to attend reformed church services or recognise Elizabeth as Supreme Governor of the English Church.<sup>4</sup>

It is difficult to identify recusants before the late 1570s and early 1580s. In these years recusants faced heightened penalties and were recorded in the Pipe Rolls and then the Recusant Rolls; these are the years to which the birth of recusancy can be attributed.<sup>5</sup> Even though 'recusancy' is a term that implied rigid non-conformity, it is clear that some shifted in and out of recusancy depending on circumstances. Two key issues are that of loyalty to the crown, and the impermanence of recusant identity. For example, Henry Ferrers of Baddesley Clinton, Warwickshire was a Catholic yet loyal to the regime by discouraging recusancy, while Thomas Tresham of Rushton, Northamptonshire was Catholic and probably less loyal than historians have previously supposed.<sup>6</sup> For example, Ferrers' name was never recorded in the Recusant Rolls, nor was he fined for absenting himself from church, suggesting that he conformed outwardly and attended reformed services, and while Tresham was too antiquated to be involved in the treasonous antics which undid his son, Francis, in 1605, his political influence was well-defined as Catholic.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott, 'Introduction: The Catholic Gentry in English Society', in Peter Marshall and Scott (eds.), *Catholic Gentry in English Society: The Throckmortons of Coughton from Reformation to Emancipation* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing: 2009), p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), p. 333; Marshall, *Reformation England*, p. 169.

<sup>6</sup> Sandeep Kaushik, 'Resistance, Loyalty and Recusant Politics: Thomas Tresham and the Elizabethan State' *Midland History* 21 (1996), pp. 37-72.

<sup>7</sup> See Elizabeth K. Berry, 'Henry Ferrers: an early Warwickshire Antiquary 1550-1633' in *Dugdale Society Occasional Papers* 16 (Vivian Ridler, Printer to the University: Oxford, 1965), p. 17; and Kaushik, 'Resistance, loyalty and recusant politics, 37-72.

As previously mentioned, group of Catholics called 'church papists' refers to a group of people who conformed to the Religious Settlement publicly, yet privately continued to practice the Catholic faith insofar as they were able. Church papists practiced this dual-doctrine through the whole of Elizabeth's reign; it did not fade with the birth of recusancy.<sup>8</sup> Strictly categorising Catholics within these definitions is therefore troublesome. Some Catholics moved in and out of recusancy or conformity often. Families may have been divided along religious lines, or a split may have been visible within a nuclear family with a conforming husband and non-conforming wife and children, in an attempt to avoid fines.<sup>9</sup>

The direct results of the 1559 change in religious service on the consciences of English Catholics cannot be underestimated. The new social, political and religious problems of the reign required innovative resolutions. The Privy Council questioned to whom were Catholics faithful and loyal – the queen or the pope, or potentially other foreign Catholic rulers with a possible claim to the English throne? Catholics wondered if their physical presence at reformed service was a grievous sin. These two questions were at the forefront of much early Elizabethan polemic. On the question of whether or not Catholics could attend reformed service to avoid breaking the law and incurring penalties, English Catholics petitioned the Council of Trent in 1562 asking:

Those who hitherto in no wise be induced to be present at the aforesaid common prayers and sermons, desire very earnestly to be instructed on what men of true piety and learning think they ought to do. For if it is allowed, without danger to the soul or offence to God, to obey the public

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<sup>8</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1993), pp. 73-99.

<sup>9</sup> Marshall and Scott, 'Introduction', p. 2.

law of the kingdom, they would happily do so. On the other hand, if there is in this point any danger to salvation, or high treason to God, they have decided that they are prepared to suffer anything rather than do or omit anything by which they understand God would be offended or angered.<sup>10</sup>

The Council's reply to English Catholics was that it was indeed a sin to go to reformed services:

That without heinous offence and the indignation of God, you may not be present at such praier of hereticks, or at their sermons: and that farre better it were to suffer any whatsoever most bitter cruelties, than in most wicked and abominable rites & services by the least signe to consent unto them.<sup>11</sup>

The changes in religion seem to have been implemented very slowly, and initially it was by no means clear at first to many Catholics that they were supposed to stay away from services in the parish church. Alban Langdale, the deprived archdeacon of Chichester, defended the practice of outward conformity, which met the needs of the county gentry to maintain their own local positions, and the laity to avoid fines and remain active members of the wider community. A document in the *State Papers* has been attributed to Langdale, though there is some speculation about its authorship.<sup>12</sup> The document is a discourse, attempting to defend the decision of Ralph Sheldon, a Worcestershire and Warwickshire man, to conform and attend parish services, and is therefore a

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<sup>10</sup> 'Petition of English Catholics to the Council of Trent [ca. June 1562]' Vatican City, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Coneilio Tridentino, 151, ff.130r-131r, in Ginerva Crosignani, Thomas M. McCoog and Michael Questier (eds.), *Recusancy and Conformity in Early Modern England* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2010), p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> 'The Declaration of the Fathers of the Council of Trent [August 1562]', in Crosignani *et al*, *Recusancy and Conformity in Early Modern England*, p. 19.

<sup>12</sup> This discourse is sometimes attributed to Langdon because Robert Persons found the same annotations as in the discourse in Langdon's London library, see J.H. Pollen (ed.), 'Father Persons' Memoirs', in *CRS Misc. IV* (1907), pp. 3-6.

defense of outward conformity or church papism.<sup>13</sup> This goes against much of the missionary literature for English Catholics, and suggests that it remained a disputed question. William Allen made clear that attending reformed services was not excusable; arguing against what he thought was a dangerous but common opinion of the 1560s.<sup>14</sup> Laurence Vaux echoed Allen's judgment in 1566, writing that it was a spiritual assault to attend heretical services, but both of these wrote from the comparative safety of exile.<sup>15</sup> John Young wrote in 1573 a Latin treatise *De Schismate*, against occasional conformity, but Alexandra Walsham suggests that it may not have travelled out of Louvain.<sup>16</sup>

Propaganda against occasional conformity increased in the 1570s, strongly suggesting that it remained a problem. Gregory Martin's *Treatise of Schism* published in 1578 was followed in 1580 by Robert Person's *Brief Discourse containing certayne reasons why Catholiques refuse to go to Church*. The point was not effectively made it seems, as the issue was still alive in the 1590s. A frustrated Henry Garnet wrote in 1593, 'Who knoweth not how often the question of going to hereticall churches hath bene tossed around our countrey?'<sup>17</sup> Indeed, Bridget Strange, a middle-aged woman from Gloucestershire was imprisoned in 1593, after thirty years of resolute recusancy.

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<sup>13</sup> SP 12/144, f.137, A discourse delivered to Mr Sheldon to persuade him to conform. Arguments to prove it is lawful for a Roman Catholic to attend the protestant service, 1580.

<sup>14</sup> Eamon Duffy, 'Allen, William (1532–1594)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Oct 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.eproxy2.lib.hku.hk/view/article/391>, accessed 24 March 2015].

<sup>15</sup> Laurence Vaux, *Catechisme*, p. xxxviii.

<sup>16</sup> Walsham, *Church Papists*, p. 24.

<sup>17</sup> [Henry Garnet], *A Treatise of Christian Renunciation...Whereunto is added a short discourse against going to Hereticall churches with a Protestation* (London Secret Press, 1593), p. 13.

Certain that attending reformed services was ruinous to her immortal soul, she told government officials that 'she should be mad if she should go to the church', and was imprisoned.<sup>18</sup>

In the 1580s, however, under conditions of heightened persecution by the Protestant government and authorities, some priests began to demonstrate that Catholics could attend reformed services, as long as they did not pray or receive the Eucharist, and made it clear that they were attending the service to please the queen and not as an act of religious conformity.<sup>19</sup> In this manner, heads of households could also strategically conform without their wives and children doing the same. William Wigmore of Lucton in Herefordshire, who had hitherto shunned Sunday services until he came of age and inherited an income and estate, chose to conform in order to preserve these.<sup>20</sup> In 1577 a Hereford brewer named John Vicars was recorded as attending reformed service, but he walked up and down the aisles of the Cathedral to avoid actually listening to the service, thus spiritually removing himself from his physical space.<sup>21</sup> Conformity should be seen as a positive social move, rather than as cowardice or indifference. The margins between conformity and recusancy were variable, and Catholics were able to manoeuvre between the two.<sup>22</sup>

The initial philosophy of the Religious Settlement and its later failure to secure complete conformity are difficult to understand. The wording of the

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<sup>18</sup> Anthony G. Petti (ed.), *Recusant Documents from the Eliesmere Manuscripts* Catholic Record Society 60 (London, 1968), p. 87.

<sup>19</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain: Catholic Christendom 1300-1700* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p. 63.

<sup>20</sup> Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 54.

<sup>21</sup> Patrick Ryan (ed.), 'Diocesan Returns of Recusants for England and Wales 1577', in *CRS Misc. XII* (London, 1921), pp. 78-79.

<sup>22</sup> Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 55.

Settlement was perhaps intended to leave few in doubt that the government's objectives would be met at all costs. The act stated that 'all and every person and persons inhabiting within this realm' must 'diligently and faithfully' attend reformed services on Sundays and holy days, 'having no lawful or reasonable excuse to be absent'.<sup>23</sup> Refusal to accept this writ as law and absent oneself from services would result in the punishment of a 12*d.* fine for each offence, to be collected by the churchwardens of the parish and distributed to the poor therein.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, non-conformity was very much a local concern; the national government had put the responsibility of enforcing conformity on the country's Catholics into local hands. As it happened, this was neither an efficient nor an effective method of battling non-conformity.

If the recusant refused to pay the 12*d.* fine, the next legal step was an appearance in the assize court. This seems to have been rarely used however, and in general the only possible punishment remained the 12*d.* fine, simply enforced by a higher power than the churchwardens.<sup>25</sup> Here the bishops and civil judges heard the cases and delivered verdicts. On the other hand, recusancy offences could be reported directly to the bishop if the churchwardens met little success. The bishop could either enforce the monetary fine, or impose excommunication from the church, a great threat that would revoke the recusants' remaining social rights within the parish.<sup>26</sup>

Here it may be useful to examine briefly the ramifications of the early punishments for non-conformity – the 12*d.* fine and the act of excommunication.

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<sup>23</sup> 1 Eliz. c.2 (1559).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

The matter of churchwardens collecting the sum from non-conformists is complex, however; fines may not have been collected by disinclined churchwardens, but then again they may not have had to be collected because the members of the Catholic community may not as yet have chosen to recuse themselves from the parish church. Midland churchwardens' accounts shed little light here. Viewed against the backdrop of the realities of Elizabethan social life, we must explore this law and its consequences on the community. One's conscience may well have been strained, but this could perhaps be quelled by fear of the alternative. Excommunication meant being barred from church services, but this was likely the smallest worry of a troubled and confused Catholic, and indeed had little effect on the resolute recusant.<sup>27</sup> Excommunication also brought social punishments such as being cut off from communal parish life, and this may have been what distressed Catholics and recusants most, though the documentation here is patchy.

It has been argued that the churchwardens neglected their task of detecting and punishing non-conformists, which encouraged Catholics to continue in their recusancy. Indeed, Burghley believed this to be the case:

The causes that moved the renewing of this law, for that it said the peane being no grater than xiid. no officer did seke to chardg and offender therunto, so that the numbers of evill disposed persons increased therein to offend by the Imprime.<sup>28</sup>

There were social reasons why churchwardens chose to be quite lax in these duties. It must also be appreciated, however, why many conservative-leaning parishioners chose to attend the reformed service, and may have done so with

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<sup>27</sup> Roger B. Manning, 'Elizabethan Recusancy Commissions', *The Historical Journal* 15 (1972), p. 23.

<sup>28</sup> BL Cotton MS Titus B. III, 22, f.65r. 'A paper in Burghley's hand, not dated but later than 1581'.



varying strains on their conscience. Antipathy towards attending services could be shown in varying degrees or perhaps not at all. Catholics could refuse communion, or perform comical acts of resistance, for example by blocking their ears lest they hear the service, or by falling asleep. Some parishioners brought with them to the service Catholic objects such as rosary beads, thus changing the space, at least for them personally, into Catholic space.<sup>29</sup> In 1577, James Eton, the chapter clerk of Hereford Cathedral, spiritually removed himself from reformed services while dutifully attending in body by sitting so far away from the preacher that he could not hear the service.<sup>30</sup> Marian priests such as Thomas Harding and Nicholas Sanders petitioned the Vatican to obtain permission for Catholics to attend reformed services to avoid the penalties of the law.<sup>31</sup> The request was not a light one and in the end was not granted. The best the Vatican could permit was the absolution of Catholics who had attended Sunday services but who still refused to take communion.<sup>32</sup>

It is clear, however, that some members of the Catholic community, including former Marian priests, saw merit in the Catholic community choosing to keep their faith all the while avoiding the penalties. Thomas Bentham, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, upon learning that some parishioners attended services but brought with them Latin primers or rosary beads, attempted to reform the state of affairs in 1565. An injunction stated:

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<sup>29</sup> Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 93.

<sup>30</sup> Ryan, 'Diocesan Returns of Recusants for England and Wales, 1577', p. 78.

<sup>31</sup> Lucy Wooding, 'Harding, Thomas (1516–1572)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com.eproxy2.lib.hku.hk/view/article/12264, accessed 28 April 2015].

<sup>32</sup> A.O. Meyer, *England and the Catholic Church under Queen Elizabeth* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & co, 1915), p. 475.

Item we charge and command that every parson, vicar and curate shall with the help of the churchwardens choose in their parish eight six or four at the least of the most substantial and honest men in the parish, who being charged upon their corporal oaths ... shall have authority to see good order kept in the church; they shall first gently admonish them [who bring Catholic objects to service], and if they will not be improved so, then two of the honest men aforesaid shall lead them up into the chancel door and set them with their faces looking down towards the people for the space of one quarter of an hour.<sup>33</sup>

It seems clear that in the early years of the Religious Settlement, church papism was of more concern to ecclesiastical authorities than recusancy. Edwin Sandys's visitation articles for Worcester in 1569 enquired into the number of communicants rather than the number of attendees at each service, and whether there were any in the parish who used Latin books or beads.<sup>34</sup> He also asked:

Whether there be any in your parish that by speech or otherwise deprave the service of the Church now received, or speak against true religion now set forth, or either by word or writing maintain the usurped authority of the Bishop or Rome, the blasphemous private Mass, or any other point of popery.<sup>35</sup>

So Catholicism was not ignored in Sandy's articles, but the issue was whether or not the Catholic went to and listened at services.

Whether there be any in your parish that are disturbers of Divine Service in the church, either by open reproving of the minister doing his service, or by talking, walking, or by other such means.<sup>36</sup>

It seemed from the outset that the church was an ineffectual authority in enforcing the Acts, as was evident from its failure to eradicate Catholicism. The issue of how to deal with the changes was fueled by the confusion surrounding it; the authority to punish was divided between the churchwardens, the archdeacons and bishops, until it became clear that the church and secular

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<sup>33</sup> W.H. Frere, 'Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Reformation Period' *Alcuin Club Collections* 16 (1910), p. 168.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 223, 226.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

courts needed to collaborate together to tackle the issue of nonconformity and then recusancy.<sup>37</sup>

Such was the importance of the Religious Settlement to the newly appointed bishops that ecclesiastical commissioners were requested by them almost immediately, and subsequently granted by the queen. The bishops whom Elizabeth appointed to the Midland counties had a strong Protestant background; four out of five were Marian exiles, namely Thomas Bentham of Coventry and Lichfield, John Scory of Hereford, Nicholas Bullingham of Lincoln and Edwin Sandys of Worcester. The fifth, Edmund Scambler of Peterborough, led an underground Protestant church in London under Mary Tudor.<sup>38</sup>

Ecclesiastical commissions were able to apply additional punishments to non-conformists than the bishops and churchwardens could at the ecclesiastical courts. Ecclesiastical commissioners could imprison recusants, force them to listen to churchmen who attempted to convert them, and take sureties against them.<sup>39</sup> Understanding that the Religious Settlement had serious limitations in eradicating Catholicism, the bishops enlisted the help of commissioners all the while supporting aggressive recusancy bills in parliament. Until 1581 the queen habitually denied these requests, leaving the ecclesiastical commissioners were the only potent tool against non-conformity.<sup>40</sup> This may be placed into the context of heightened political alarm in the late 1570s and early 1580s.

The timeline of anti-Catholic laws and the varying degrees in which they were enforced throughout the reign is a point of interest. It is not a simple linear

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<sup>37</sup> Manning, 'Elizabethan Recusancy Commissions', p. 23.

<sup>38</sup> Please see chapter 1 of this dissertation for discussion of the Midland bishops.

<sup>39</sup> Manning, 'Elizabethan Recusancy Commissions', p. 24.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

frame, increasing in harshness because previous methods had been unsuccessful, but rather a snapshot of reactionary methods put in place due to external forces. The management of the Catholic issue demonstrates well the strengths and weaknesses of the queen's policy, as well as her character. Elizabeth's reluctance to strong arm the Catholic community – not necessarily out of enlightened kindness but rather fear of European threats and rebellion at home – was shown from the beginning of her reign, and continued throughout, wavering at certain moments of crisis. She had witnessed what division of faith could do not only in the reigns of her predecessors, but also in her own with the Northern Rising of 1569 and the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572 in France. She understood the possibility that domestic tension coupled with foreign aid could jeopardise her status as queen and her physical safety. After the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, Elizabeth wrote to Francis Walsingham, her ambassador in France:

We are sorry to hear, first, the great slaughter in France of noblemen and gentlemen, unconvicted and untried, so suddenly...That being after excused by a conspiracy and treason wrought against our good brother's [Charles IX] own person, which whether it was true or false, in another prince's kingdom and jurisdiction where we have nothing to do, we minded not to be curious.<sup>41</sup>

Fear fueled her caution and her indecisive policy. She feared that if she pressed too hard and pushed to the limit, foreign aid would flow from the continent to aid English Catholics. The inconsistency of Elizabeth's anti-Catholic policy was due to the fact that the queen and Council could not politically afford to offend Catholic nations and powers; the queen's debated legitimacy was a bone of contention, but one that would not be resolved through aggression. There was a

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<sup>41</sup> 'Queen Elizabeth to Sir Francis Walsingham, Ambassador to France, December 1572', in Leah H. Marcus, Janel Mueller and Mary Beth Rose (eds.) *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 215.

great need early in the reign to be decisive and firm, but also to tread lightly and not appear unreasonable.

In 1564 the bishops were required to assess the justices of the peace and other local government officials, vouchsafing their stance on religion as favourable, indifferent or hostile. For those disaffected towards reformed religion, the bishops were meant to offer guidance. What is most interesting about these returns by the bishops is the complaint of obstinate cathedral clergy and at times local officials, but there is no hint that the laity boycotted services *en masse*.<sup>42</sup> This nationwide assessment of religious allegiance among the laity was not part of a drive towards anti-Catholic legislation, but it is relevant that at this time the queen and Privy Council thought it necessary and wise to evaluate the range and scope of non-conformity in the country. The queen and Council were unwilling to assign absolute power against recusancy to the clergy and church courts, however, and justices of the assize and justices of the peace were also assigned to the task.<sup>43</sup> This reflects how Catholicism was simultaneously a political as well as religious problem. Even so, the justices of the peace did not effectively live up to the task; perhaps conscious of the complex and precarious social balance of the Elizabethan community, few were keen to disrupt the peace.

Mary Bateson analysed in 1895 the bishop's findings of their 1564 assessment of the justices of the peace and local officials. For the country as a whole, roughly 431 justices of the peace were reported as being favourable to

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<sup>42</sup> See Mary Bateson (ed.), 'A Collection of Original Letters from the Bishop to the Privy Council, 1564'.

<sup>43</sup> Manning, 'Elizabethan Recusancy Commissions', p. 24.

religion, 246 as indifferent and 157 as hinderers.<sup>44</sup> For the Midland counties, the reports drawn up by Thomas Bentham, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, for Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Shropshire in 1564 were either superficial or revealing of his own beliefs of how local offices could work. Bentham listed seventeen justices of the peace for Staffordshire and marked by each name that they were fit for their office. However, ten of these seventeen were recorded as being 'adversaries to religion and no favourers thereof, neither in deed nor in word.'<sup>45</sup> Henry Vernon, esquire of Hilton in Staffordshire was specifically marked as an opponent to reformed religion, and three more were recorded as 'hurtful to justice and great maintainers [of traditional religion]'.<sup>46</sup> Brian Fowler was also included, whose home was on the site of the former priory of St Thomas near Baswich. Fowler was at this time harbouring David Pole, the deprived Bishop of Peterborough, and on this Bentham wrote: 'Many people think worse of the regiment and religion than they would do, because that divers lewd priests have resort hither, but what conference they have I cannot learn.'<sup>47</sup> This demonstrates that some justices listed as 'fit' for their office were indeed not suitable, by the understanding of the law. In Derbyshire, Bentham records twelve justices of the peace 'meet' to continue in office, while four were questioned, two as adversaries of religion. As for Shropshire, Bentham wrote of the justices, 'I judge it to be well done, so that I can neither justly change, add or take any thing away', though included in this group are John Middlemore of Edgebaston, Sir Robert Throckmorton of Coughton, Thomas Throckmorton of Morehall and

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<sup>44</sup> Bateson, 'A Collection of Original Letters from the Bishop to the Privy Council, 1564', p. iii.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

Michael Purefey of Calcat, who were all recorded as 'no favourers of religion'.<sup>48</sup> Bentham wrote that he had Mr Nowell, Dean of Lichfield, and his own registrar James Weston, make the survey, 'men godly and zealous, of longer continuance, and thereby of more knolege and experience in my Dioces than I.'<sup>49</sup> Bentham's report is interesting, for according to the standards of the queen and Council, many of the justices were unfit, and he admitted that 'I have found open resistance in matters of change' among local officials.<sup>50</sup> This may have been misjudgment on Bentham's part, but it is also possible that, considering the relatively high numbers of Catholics in local roles, Bentham saw religion as separate from the responsibilities of public roles, and believed that one could be a justice of the peace and a Catholic.

The Religious Settlement made clear the queen and Council's doctrinal stance, but confrontation was delayed until the situation became clearer. While the issue was frequently discussed in polemical debates, English Catholics did not decide *en masse* to resolutely recuse themselves from services.<sup>51</sup> Ostensibly, this came with the Bull of Excommunication against Elizabeth in 1570. Once members of the Catholic community began to recuse themselves, the bishops pressured the government to re-evaluate the Religious Settlement, which meant that it finally became necessary to define what it meant to be a Catholic.

Amendments to the recusancy laws seem to have been discussed more than they were passed. By the early 1570s, Burghley and other members of the Council and the bishops were pushing for radical change, but it was not to come

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42-46.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>51</sup> For example, Robert Persons wrote *A brief discourse containing certayne reasons why Catholiques refuse to goe to Church* [London Secret Press, 1580].

quickly. The queen, despite support from both Houses of Parliament, the Privy Council and the bishops, vetoed a bill in 1571, meant to force Catholics to attend reformed services and take communion by increased financial penalties, because it was believed Catholics cared more about this than imprisonment.<sup>52</sup> The bills discussed at the national level in the 1570s have similar characteristics: increased financial penalties; conformity must come from both attending services and taking communion; support from both local government and the bishops. These were constant features in the anti-Catholic laws.

The discovery of recusants and the enforcement of the Settlement and later the statutes was the responsibility of local lay magistrates. In some counties there seems to have emerged a pattern of appointing radical Protestants to these post.<sup>53</sup> There is some evidence of this occurring in the Midlands. The justices of the peace for Warwickshire in 1570 included Clement Throckmorton, who was one of the Throckmortons who broke with the old faith.<sup>54</sup> He served as justice of the peace for Warwickshire from 1547 to 1572, and also as a member of the Ecclesiastical High Commission in 1572, among other local offices including Member of Parliament.<sup>55</sup> Indicative of his religious and political allegiances, Clement Throckmorton was one of the eight justices of the peace of Warwickshire who submitted to the articles of Uniformity and vowed to serve

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<sup>52</sup> J.E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments, Vol. 1, 1559-1581* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1965), p. 216.

<sup>53</sup> Manning, 'Elizabethan Recusancy Commissions', p. 28.

<sup>54</sup> Peter Marshall, 'Crisis of Allegiance: George Throckmorton and Henry Tudor', in Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott, eds., *Catholic Gentry in English Society: The Throckmortons of Coughton from Reformation to Emancipation* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), p. 61.

<sup>55</sup> Susan Cogan, 'Reputation, Credit and Patronage: Throckmorton Men and Women, c.1560-1620', in Marshall and Scott, *Catholic Gentry in English Society*, p. 74.



the queen.<sup>56</sup> The Council, aware that the justices of the peace did not wish to upset any social balance, wrote to the commissioners of Warwickshire to find 'on [one] or two honest and discreate gent: beeinge Justices of the peace, and not parciallie affected towards them habitinge neare unto them.'<sup>57</sup> The Privy Council believed that, overall, the justices of the peace in the dioceses of Worcester, Hereford and the county of Stafford were 'most hostile to the government'.<sup>58</sup>

Elizabeth progressed through Staffordshire in 1575 and was apparently unhappy with the state of religion there.<sup>59</sup> A few days after she left the county, in August, the Privy Council summoned a number of the county's gentry to appear before it in London for not attending church. Brian Fowler, the aforementioned justice of the peace and priest harbourer, was summoned, as was John Chillington of Brewood, who had entertained the queen at his house while she was in the county, and was also a justice of the peace. Also summoned were John Draycott of Paynsley, Francis Gatacre of Swynnerton in Shropshire, Erasmus Wolseley of Wolseley, Thomas Peshall of Horsley, Hugh Erdeswick of Sandon and his son, Sampson, and William Macclesfield of Maer. All except Peshall appeared before the Council on 17 August, 'alleging their consciences and examples of their forefathers who taught them so.' For two days the Privy Council attempted to persuade them to conform, without success. They were informed that they would not be allowed to return to Staffordshire until they obeyed the laws; although Fowler was allowed to leave London to pay a debt and Erdeswick was

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<sup>56</sup> SP 12/67, f.50, Certificate by the Justices of Warwickshire of their submission to the Articles of Uniformity, 1570.

<sup>57</sup> SCLA ER82/2/4, Privy Council to Commissioners of Warwickshire, 31 December 1592.

<sup>58</sup> Bateson, *A collection of Original Letters from the Bishops to the Privy Council 1564*, p. iii.

<sup>59</sup> APC, 1575-1577, p. 13.

allowed to return home to collect books and notes, both men were ordered to report to the Bishop of Worcester.<sup>60</sup> The men remained obstinate and by November 1575 the Council began to imprison them, Draycott and Gatacre were imprisoned in the Fleet in London, Wolseley in the Gatehouse in Westminster, Erdeswick and Macclesfield to the Marshalsea.<sup>61</sup> By 1576 the group were one-by-one released from prison. Gatacre promised conformity, Fowler fell ill and was believed to be close to conformity, and Draycott was involved in a law-suit. The Erdeswicks were released on bond in April 1576, and Wolseley was respited in June.<sup>62</sup> In this case, the recusants' obstinacy was eventually rewarded with freedom.

Successful prosecution of recusancy varied between the counties. Many Catholic gentlemen remained active in local offices, if not as justices of the peace then as sheriffs.<sup>63</sup> Ralph Sheldon was a justice of the peace for Worcestershire in 1574, sheriff between 1576 and 1577 and commissioner of the musters.<sup>64</sup> George Throckmorton of Great Alne Fulbrook, Warwickshire, was master of the queen's hawks in 1570, a position held at court.<sup>65</sup> This is an interesting contrast between Catholic exiles; some, albeit few, Midlands Catholics were able to thrive in local, national and court positions. During his post as master of the hawks, George Throckmorton was charged with enquiring into Richard Norton of Norton Conyers, Yorkshire, after the Northern Rebellion, and was ordered to

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41, 44.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58, 75, 80-81, 105, 145-7.

<sup>63</sup> Manning, 'Elizabethan Recusancy Commissions', p. 24, fn.

<sup>64</sup> BL Lansdowne 56, f. 168.

<sup>65</sup> A. L. Rowse, *Ralegh and the Throckmortons*, (London: The Reprint Society, 1964), p. 10; BL Lansdowne 3(89), f. 197; APC, v. 29; SP 12/67, f.71, The Queen to George Throckmorton, March 1570.

confiscate his lands in Buckingham.<sup>66</sup> Thomas Bentham wrote to the Privy Council on 10 November 1564 that 'The number of attornies, frequenting the assizes and sessions at Stafford, are iuged to bried and norishe matters of stryf and contention.'<sup>67</sup>

The justices of the peace, who were also given primary responsibility to enforce the 1581 Recusancy Act, remained seemingly disinclined to enforce the law strictly and collect the increased monetary fine. It is recorded in Father Persons' memoirs how parliament mustered a response to this situation:

In the beginning of this year [1581], on the 12<sup>th</sup> of January, a Proclamation of the Queen against the Jesuits was published, commanding, under the severest penalties, that no one should receive them into their houses nor allow their children or kinsfolk to go and study in their schools and seminaries abroad. Parliament was still sitting, which had assembled principally against the Catholics, on account of the coming over of the Jesuits, to whom was attributed the defection of many who refused to go to heretical churches.'<sup>68</sup>

Parsons then discussed the £20 fine and the fact that it was treason to be a Catholic priest in England or to be reconciled by a priest, and concluded, 'In a word, the persecution increased much on this occasion, and the number of those who were made prisoners, both laymen and priests, grew much greater.'<sup>69</sup>

It is unclear why this role was not entrusted to the ecclesiastical commissioners, who, based on their enthusiasm to promote the laws, were surely the wiser choice, rather than the justices of the peace, under whose eye the enforcement of the £20 fine simply backfired, partly for the same reason

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<sup>66</sup> SP 12/67, f.71, The Queen to George Throckmorton, March 1570. Richard Norton managed to flee to Flanders after the rebellion, while his brother, Thomas, was executed.

<sup>67</sup> Bateson, *A collection of Original Letters from the Bishops to the Privy Council 1564*, p. 40.

<sup>68</sup> J.H. Pollen (ed.), *Father Persons' Memoirs (Concluded)*, *CRS Misc.* 4 (1906), p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

Elizabeth executed Catholics as traitors, rather than heretics – to avoid making martyrs, and partly through a wish to avoid social upheaval. Rather than forcing the recusant community into conformity on account of the magnitude of the punishment, what quickly became clear was that the justices of the peace could not cope with the procedure and many recusants were not required to pay the sum. Imposing the fine required an indictment and proving the guilt of every individual each month; something apparently beyond the realm of capability or priorities of the justices.<sup>70</sup> In counties such as Hampshire proceedings for recusancy took up the entire time of the justices of the peace at the Quarter Sessions, resulting in the neglect of other cases and responsibilities, though there is no evidence to support or disprove this theory for the Midlands.<sup>71</sup> After the recusancy act of 1587, the fine could be collected automatically without an indictment until the recusant conformed, but this confirmed that the justices of the peace had not previously been successful in suppressing non-conformity.<sup>72</sup>

It did not take long for the results of the statute of 1581 to be found wanting, and in 1586 another statute was put into effect. The new statute was essentially the same as that of 1581, but with new clauses added that were intended to make it operate more efficiently and quickly.<sup>73</sup> Its main means of doing so was through more threats of poverty, this time with the promise to seize two thirds of the property, chattels and goods owned by any recusants who

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<sup>70</sup> Manning, 'Elizabethan Recusancy Commissions', p. 26

<sup>71</sup> John E. Paul, 'Hampshire Recusants in the time of Elizabeth I, with special reference to Winchester', *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club*, xxi, part ii (1959), p. 74.

<sup>72</sup> 29 Eliz. I, c.6 (1586).

<sup>73</sup> Bowler, 'Some Notes on the Recusant Rolls of the Exchequer', p. 182.

had not paid their accumulated fine.<sup>74</sup> Robert Southwell wrote to the Jesuit

Father General Aquaviva on 25 July 1586:

And although after the first promulgation of the statute, which had been passed in parliament, even the very staunchest Catholics felt some fear; yet afterwards, recovering themselves, they returned to their former fervor. From want of missionaries, however, some who then grow faint-hearted, have not yet been restored to their former spirit. It is certainly matter for regret, that there are many counties, each containing not a few Catholics, in which there is not a single priest, though earnestly begged for by many.<sup>75</sup>

In Warwickshire, the lands of Thomas Higgenson of Berkeswell were seized and farmed for the crown in 1592/1593, after he was unable to pay £260 for one year's recusancy. His lands were worth £6 8s. 4d. per year.<sup>76</sup> In the same year the farm of Thomas Braban of Kentchurch in Hereford was seized, after he owed £53 6s. 8d. in fines. £40 of which were in arrears.<sup>77</sup> Two-thirds of Lord Vaux's estates of Great and Little Harrowden were seized after accumulating debts of over £2,077.<sup>78</sup> These harsh measures were not meant primarily to stock the queen's Exchequer, but rather to persuade the recusant into conformity with the threat of perpetual and hopeless debt. Further evidence that these fines were politically rather than economically motivated was that a recusant needed only to pledge conformity to the queen to secure the cancellation of all debts and the return of all lands and goods.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>75</sup> J.H. Pollen, *Unpublished Documents Relating to the English Martyrs* vol. I (1584-1603) *CRS*, (1908), pp. 308-309.

<sup>76</sup> E 377/1, *Recusant Roll 1592-1593*, Warwickshire.

<sup>77</sup> Hugh Bowler, *Recusant Roll No. 2 (1593-1594)*, *CRS* 57 (1965), p. 43.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* p. 113.

<sup>79</sup> Hugh Bowler, 'Some Notes on the Recusant Rolls of the Exchequer', *Biographical Studies* [vol] (1957), p. 183.

Even after the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, the Council saw a potential threat in recusants. Despite its iconic importance, the 1588 Armada mostly indicated that Spain had seriously hostile intentions that would not disappear. The danger of another Spanish invasion seemed imminent in the early 1590s, causing a reconstitution of the statute of 1581. An 'Act against popish recusants' was passed in 1593, which was meant to force recusants to stay within close proximity to their homes, stating recusants shall 'repair to their place of dwelling where they usually heretofore made their common abode, and shall not, any time after, pass or remove above five miles from thence.'<sup>80</sup> This remodelling of the 1581 statute was probably due to the impact of Jesuits and seminary priests on the conservative community of England.<sup>81</sup> The arrival of clergy from the continent changed the relationship between the government and the Catholic community; the challenge they presented was clear and with the numbers of recusants potentially increasing, the queen and Council could no longer maintain a lenient policy towards Catholics. 'The expense is reckoned, the enterprise is begun', wrote Campion in his 'Brag'.<sup>82</sup>

The redesign of the Recusancy Laws in the early 1590s was also probably why there is such an extensive list of recusants in Warwickshire for the year 1592.<sup>83</sup> Unfortunately the survival of this extraordinary document seems to be unique among other Midland counties, but analysis of it over the rest of the chapter will shed light on at least one Midland county. If this commissioners'

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<sup>80</sup> 35 Eliz c.2 (1592).

<sup>81</sup> Manning, 'Elizabethan Recusancy Commissions', p. 31.

<sup>82</sup> Richard Simpson, *Edmund Campion: A Biography* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1867), pp. 226-228.

<sup>83</sup> SP 12/243, f.202, Book Containing the second certificates of the Commissioners for the county of Warwick to the council, November [?] 1592.

report is representative of the rest of the country, the commissions for recusants in the early 1590s seem to have been the most effective in recording recusants, as there are 205 recusants named in this report, compared with four recusants recorded by the justices of the peace in 1592 in the Warwickshire Recusant Rolls. Even though the justices of the peace in some counties were either reluctant to charge recusants or had difficulty detecting them, entries and fines paid increased each year in the Pipe Rolls between 1581 and 1592, so much so that finally it became necessary to create a separate roll meant solely for such fines, the Recusant Rolls. All fines against recusants according to the statute of 1581 were recorded in the new rolls from Michaelmas 1592 onwards.<sup>84</sup>

Even with stronger laws against recusants, the influence of the ecclesiastical commissioners was invoked by the bishops throughout Elizabeth's reign. In 1596, on his appointment as Bishop of Worcester, Thomas Bilson recorded the diocese's need for a commissioner, grumbling:

How weak ordinary authority is to do any good on either sort [Catholics and Puritans] long experience hath taught me, excommunication being the only bridle the law yeildeth to a bishop, and either side utterly despising that course or correction, as men that gladly and of their own accord refuse to communion of the church both in sacraments and in prayers. In respect therefore of the number and danger of those divers humours both denying obedience to Her Majesty's proceedings...it please her highness to trust me and others in that shire with the commissions ecclesiastical, as in other places of like importance is used.<sup>85</sup>

The decision of the central government that ecclesiastical courts and clergy members would have limited authority over non-conformists is telling. Not satisfied that the bishops would handle the Catholic community as she

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<sup>84</sup> Hugh Bowler and T.J. McCann (eds.), *Recusants in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls, CRS 71* (1986), p. 2.

<sup>85</sup> Historical MSS Commissions, *Salisbury MSS.*, vi, 265-266.

desired, Elizabeth was decisive about not allowing the bishops full authority. This must be why the commissions of the peace were never reformed, and why important members of the Catholic gentry remained influential in county politics, such as the Throckmorton, Sheldon, Fitzherbert, Tresham and Vaux families of the Midlands. As Roger B. Manning argued, the bishops had little choice in the matter, but must have despaired as they saw the authority of the counties become a mix of monarchy, ministry and gentry.<sup>86</sup> It seems that Elizabeth was nervous about giving the bishops a free hand, unsure of how they would enforce the religious laws and how this would reverberate with the Catholic community within England and the Catholic powers of Europe.

By 1586 a change in the previous trends of relying upon justices of the peace and local clergy had begun by placing recusancy commissions into the hands of fervent Protestants.<sup>87</sup> There are cases of this happening in the Midlands counties, for example the aforementioned commissioners' report of Warwickshire from 1592 that is discussed in detail below. Since these commissions were issued out of the Exchequer, it seems that their task was chiefly financial, to collect fines from already convicted recusants, or alternatively to compel known recusants to furnish light horses for campaigns in Ireland, rather than to discover and indict new recusants.<sup>88</sup> The presence of these commissioners must have been well known in the Midlands, for there were numerous reports of recusants being required to give various sums for the furnishing of horses, though frequently the recusant pleaded poverty and begged forgiveness. In 1585, John Vernon the sheriff of Derbyshire, wrote to the Privy

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<sup>86</sup> Manning, 'Elizabethan Recusancy Commissions', p. 28.

<sup>87</sup> APC, XIV, 15.

<sup>88</sup> SP 12/208, f. 18a, 'Edmund Dunche to the Council', 20 Jan, 1588.



Council that he had consulted some of the county's recusants: Edward Bentley, a yeoman, and Godfrey Foljambe, a gentleman, had promised to each furnish one light horse. Bentley paid £25 towards his commitment, and of Foljambe it was recorded: 'Nevertheless, he is readie to doe her Ma[jesty's] service when he shalbe called vppon, but [he] not be a recusant.' Vernon wrote that one Nicholas Longford, whom he could not find as he was in London, was believed to be able to furnish two light horses.<sup>89</sup> The sheriff of Derbyshire recorded that Nicholas Longford could furnish two horses, and Godfrey Foljambe and Edward Bentley could furnish one each.<sup>90</sup>

In 1585 Henry Baskerville, the sheriff of Herefordshire, had less luck persuading recusants to commit to the furnishing of horses. Baskerville wrote to the Privy Council that John Gomond claimed, 'I do wishe of almightie god that my power were as hable as my hearte and good will is readie to answere her highness and your honors expectation herein.' Perhaps Baskerville was sympathetic to the poor Catholic, as he wrote at length, explaining that Gomond was a poor young man with a wife and three small children, had no land to live by, but one farm to maintain two plows, and the farm, valued at 20 marks a year, was taken three years ago into the queen's estate. He had an £8 annuity from his father to look after his grandmother, who was still living. Gomond did not have the means to look after his own family, let alone furnish a horse, explained Baskerville.<sup>91</sup> Baskerville recorded that Richard Lyngen, who believed the request of furnishing a light horse to cost £25, expressed: 'I knowe myself

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<sup>89</sup> SP 12/183 f.197, 'John Vernon, Sheriff of Derbyshire, to the Council', 28 October 1585.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> SP 12/183 f.178, 'Humphrey Baskerville, Sheriff of Herefordshire, to the Council', 26 Oct. 1585.

vtterlie vnable'. John Scudamore of the same county promised to furnish a horse while imprisoned, but said that they would have to wait until he was able.<sup>92</sup> From this it seems that Catholics were often eager to please the queen and Council with promises of future support, but whether or not this promise was made in good faith or as a means to alleviate pressure is unclear.

While relations with Spain were festering leading up to the Spanish Armada, new commissions were issued by the Privy Council in 1587. The new commission charged the lords lieutenant and their deputies to survey the counties and make up-to-date lists of recusants. Those suspected of possibly aiding foreign powers were to be imprisoned, and the remainder were to be placed in the guardianship of reliable gentry and clergy in the local area.<sup>93</sup> Thomas Tresham and Lord Vaux were committed to Fleet Prison in 1581, after their trial for harbouring the Jesuit Edmund Campion.<sup>94</sup> Even so, there is some documentation that suggests this commission largely failed in its objectives. One Berkshire commissioner, Sir Henry Neville, wrote to Sir Francis Knollys in 1588, expressing his concerns and doubts over the commission, which he believed was not being enforced:

So yt is this, yt please your honor: that there is noe such commission. And also the names of those recusants that are indicted. And the indictment ytself is carried away by the Clarke of the Assises & doth not remayne with the Clarke of the peace nowe sythence the last Acte of Parliament. Therefore yt cannot well be knowne unto us whoe be recusants untill the Assises. Nowe yf your honor shall thincke good to move my lords to wryte a letter to the Iustices of peace that they in their severall dyvicions doe send straight p[re]cepts to the churchwardens in everye parrishe within their said dyvicions commanding them to bring in upon their othes the

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<sup>92</sup> SP 12/183 f.178, Humphrey Baskerville, Sheriff of Herefordshire, to the Council, 26 October 1585; SP 12/183, f.95, Sir Fulke Greville to the Council, 21 Oct 1585; SP 12/183, f.154, Gilbert Lyttelton to the Council, 24 October 1585.

<sup>93</sup> SP 12/208, f.22, Earl of Kent to the Council, 22 January 1588.

<sup>94</sup> APC, XIII, p. 176.

names of all persons that are recusants & that doe not come to the churche according to the statute.<sup>95</sup>

It is unknown how this concern was followed up. The commissioners of Leicestershire imprisoned several recusants.<sup>96</sup> However, the Council rebuked the Staffordshire commissioners for ignoring their orders to record and imprison recusants: 'yo[u]r doings can [not] prove Clear from Suspicion of indifference' in the matter.<sup>97</sup> In this respect, plans concerning recusants leading up to the Spanish Armada were unsuccessful, though, as it happened, not detrimental to English victory. How the commissioners of other Midland counties responded is unclear.

Documentation of the commissions against recusants in 1591 suggests some success, or at least more efficient practice. The aforementioned commissioners' report from Warwickshire to the Privy Council, dated 25 September 1592, and styled the 'second' certificate, enumerates 285 recognised recusants within the county.<sup>98</sup> 133 of the listed recusants had been indicted, while twelve were bonded, and thirteen under house arrest or imprisoned within the previous twelve months.<sup>99</sup> Of the 285 recusants named, 144 agreed to conform, but the commissioners expressed their doubts, admitting that already some had revoked their promise, while others had absconded themselves from

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<sup>95</sup> SP 12/208, f.43, 28 Jan 1588, 'Sir Henri Neville to Sir Francis Knollys, Treasurer of the Household'.

<sup>96</sup> SP 12/208, f.91, 12 Feb 1588, 'William Cave, sheriff, and other commissioners of Leicestershire to the Council'

<sup>97</sup> SP 12/208, f.46, [Earl of Shrewesbury?] to [the commission for recusants?] in the county of Stafford, 30 January 1588.

<sup>98</sup> SP 12/243, f. 202, Book containing the second certificates of the Commissioners for the county of Warwick to the Council, November [?] 1592.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

the commissioners' territory and control.<sup>100</sup> Unfortunately, the survival of this prolific commissioners' report is unique to Warwickshire.

What is striking about the Warwickshire report is the absence of gentry family names; only nineteen of the 285 persons are described as gentry. There could be several reasons for this, and they are worth exploring. The possibility that the heads of gentry families conformed to preserve their social status has been frequently suggested in the past. But it could be possible that in this commissioners' report, it is that the number of lay recusants is uncharacteristically high, rather than the returns of gentry names substantially low. To make up for years of difficulty and failure, the possibility that the commissioners for this report acted zealously in returning seems possible – it is a massive and thorough account that suggests Catholics of lower status were considered just as dangerous and offensive as the socially powerful Catholic gentry, at least with the threat of invasion pending.

This report from 1592 demonstrates that the new recusancy commissioners were more successful at discovering recusants than the justices of the peace, bishops and churchwardens had previously been, at least in Warwickshire. Whether they were any more successful in convincing recusants to conform is another matter entirely, and one not easily understood. Roger B. Manning has found that in Sussex, the number of recusants was more or less sustained after 1580.<sup>101</sup> The success of the 1591 commission spurred a 1593 Act of Parliament which forced known recusants over the age of sixteen to stay within five miles of their home. Punishment for disobeying this law was grim;

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*; Manning, 'Elizabethan Recusancy Commissions', p. 33.

<sup>101</sup> Roger B. Manning, *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1969), p. 259.

forfeiture of goods and lands.<sup>102</sup> The parish minister was given the charge of certifying that recusants within his care had remained within the boundaries of this law.

Though acts against recusants were in constant flux and subject to amendment with the aim to detect non-conformity and enforce conformity, the queen and her government were able to show leniency when this was the path of least resistance. For example, in 1592 the commissioners of Northamptonshire wrote to the Privy Council reporting that the Lord Vaux and members of his family had conformed, but they required further instruction. The Privy Council responded with a succinct paraphrase of the policy that leniency and restraint should be practiced upon certain recusants. They wrote:

The course appointed to be taken is intended against those onelie that shalbe founde obstinate, and to such as have or shall yield to conformitie we wishe all favour and good encouragement to be given. To your seconde doubte, whether you shall restraine such as sithence your last certificate are fallen away in religion, forasmuch as yt is meant that all such as are or shalbe found disobedient in that kinde, being persons of the better sorte, should be committed, yf any that are newly fallen away you shall proceed with them as with the rest. And lastlie, wheras you are doubtful what you shall doe with such woemen as come not to the churche and continue in their willful Recusancie, of theise if there be any principall weomen that by their obstinancie be cause of such disorder, we thinke yt meete that you comitt some five or sixe of the best of them, so to remaine until by their husbands they maie be perswaded or wrought to conformitie.<sup>103</sup>

It is particularly interesting that the Privy Council wanted to choose five or six of the 'best' women, by which they presumably meant women of higher status, although it is unclear if this actually occurred. It is also uncertain which tactics were most effective: financial penalties (1581) or loss of social rights such as

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<sup>102</sup> 35 Eliz. c.2 (1592).

<sup>103</sup> APC., XXIII, pp. 192-193; *Statutes of the Realm*, pp. 842-846.

freedom of movement and imprisonment (1593).<sup>104</sup> The fine of £20 per calendar month was largely uncollected simply because of the vastness of the sum, but there is documentation that forfeiture of lands and goods were collected in lieu. In 1588 Richard Abington's lands in Bromyard, Herefordshire were seized and his fine was paid through their rental; William Bradstock of Corse, Gloucestershire, had his lands seized in the same year.<sup>105</sup> Manning has suggested that the penalties of the 1593 Act were imposed more regularly than the financial penalties of 1581. This implies the realisation that financial penalties had only minor success in gaining results, and therefore did little to convince recusants to conform. Restriction of mobility and imprisonment were another matter however; for these penalties hindered Catholic recusants in their daily social and economic relationships.

#### *4.2 Punishments and Consequences*

The penalties imposed upon recusants during Elizabeth's reign had the potential to be extremely severe. The majority of Catholics who found themselves punished by the Recusancy Laws faced a monetary fine, and this held true for the Midland counties. There were also instances of imprisonment on account of recusancy in the counties. William Bishop of Brailes, Warwickshire, was imprisoned in London at the Marshalsea in 1583 and John Shemondes of Tamworth, Warwickshire, was imprisoned at Warwick Gaol in 1592. By 1586, several hundred Staffordshire Catholics had been indicted for recusancy, but the majority of these were never convicted because they failed to appear before the

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<sup>104</sup> Manning, 'Elizabethan Recusancy Commissions', p. 34.

<sup>105</sup> Hugh Bowler, 'Recusants in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls, 1581-1592' *CRS* 71 (1986), pp. 9, 26.

courts.<sup>106</sup> Staffordshire men John Wynckle and George Walker were imprisoned in 1586, both of whom offered money to the queen in lieu of furnishing a light horse, 10s and £1 respectively.<sup>107</sup> Wynckle had his goods worth £23 seized by the sheriff on 18 March 1586, and was imprisoned the following month. He was described as a yeoman of Colwich parish, first indicted in 1582.<sup>108</sup> There is no further mention of him in the records after his imprisonment. The better-known heads of the Vaux, Tresham and Catesby families spent many years imprisoned. However, the crown's main weapon to promote national conformity to the Religious Settlement and later the Recusancy Laws of the 1580s was through monetary fines. These fines posed a potential threat of poverty to all but the wealthiest Catholic families.<sup>109</sup> Fear of losing their livelihood may itself have sufficed to make many Catholics conform to the laws and attend the Elizabethan church. A convincing example of this is the aforementioned commissioners' report for Warwickshire. This document shows a drop in the number of recusants recorded between the commissioners' first certificate (of which the date is unknown) and their second in 1592; a decrease of 22%, between a fifth and a quarter of the Catholic community in Warwickshire. Unfortunately the first commissioners' report does not survive, making it impossible to categorise who was dropped from the second list. The decline was probably due to a combination of genuine reform among some parishioners, a heightened move

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<sup>106</sup> Stephen Greenslade, *Catholic Staffordshire 1500-1850* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2006), p. 52.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>108</sup> *SHC* 1915, p. 381; *SHC* 1929, pp. 36, 62, 125.

<sup>109</sup> Brian Doolan, 'William Bishop – England's first post-Reformation Catholic bishop', *Catholic Women's League News*, Winter, p. 4; SP 12/243, f.202, A book containing the second certificates of the Commissioners for the county of Warwick to the Council, November [?] 1592.

towards church papism, and also the natural death of those who may have remembered religious life before the break from Rome.

This success was also suggested in the commissioners' report by the low number of recusants found in formerly Catholic parishes such as Coughton (even though Mary Arden, widow of Edward Arden, was listed on the Pipe Roll as having been convicted of recusancy in Coughton in 1587).<sup>110</sup> No recusants were recorded in the parish of Baddesley, where the Catholic Ferrers family lived at Baddesley Clinton, which suggests that the conservative leaning parishioners in that parish either conformed outwardly, had some influence over the commissioners, or removed themselves from their home parish at the time of the commission. In support of the conformist argument, Henry Ferrers of Baddesley Clinton, Warwickshire, did not believe that English subjects ought to risk recusancy.<sup>111</sup> It is possible that he influenced the conservative parishioners of Baddesley by encouraging them to attend reformed services. The commissioners' report of recusants in 1592 records that thirty-two known Warwickshire recusants had fled the county, and twenty-one Jesuits who were known to have once worked in the county had moved elsewhere.<sup>112</sup>

One major difference in the administration of the statute of 1581 (with a fine of £20 per calendar month) from the original Settlement (12*d.*) was that payments of fines would be forfeited to the queen herself. Therefore, the fines were recorded in the Pipe Rolls of the Exchequer from 1581 until 1591, rather

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<sup>110</sup> Bowler and McCann, *Recusants in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls*, p. 76.

<sup>111</sup> Jan Broadway, 'Ferrers, Henry (1550-1633)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 429.

<sup>112</sup> SP 12/243, f.202, A book containing the second certificates of the Commissioners for the county of Warwick to the Council, November [?] 1592. For more on this phenomenon, that is, just where Catholics moved, see chapter 3 of this dissertation.



than in churchwardens' reports. Thereafter the Recusant Rolls were created in 1592 and subsequently the fines appear there. Previously, the 12*d.* fine, which could still be levied after the 1581 statute under the laws of the Settlement, was not forfeited to the crown, but to the poor of the parish where it had been collected by the churchwardens.<sup>113</sup> The statute of 1581 not only mandated the £20 fine for each lunar month of missed reformed services, but dealt with other offences as well. Reconciling oneself or convincing another to reconcile with the Catholic church became punishable by death; and a priest caught celebrating mass was to be punished by a fine of 200 marks, while the fine of 100 marks was levied on a layman for hearing mass.<sup>114</sup> If the fines could not be paid, the priest would be subject to imprisonment until the debt was settled, while the layman would face one-year's imprisonment.<sup>115</sup>

Evasion of the Religious Settlement was widely practised. The easiest form of evasion was to be absent when the constable made a return of recusants.<sup>116</sup> This act induced a series of writs that the authorities often ignored in the early years of the reign. Later, the Assizes were so choked with claims against recusants that the justices of the peace had no time for other local issues.<sup>117</sup> If the bureaucracy were followed properly, the Catholic would either be indicted if he or she appeared at court, or outlawed if he or she failed to appear. There are numerous examples of Warwickshire recusants who were indicted in the return of recusants in 1592; ninety-one of the 205 were recorded as such, or about 44%, but none were recorded as outlawed or

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<sup>113</sup> Bowler, 'Some Notes of the Recusant Rolls of the Exchequer', p. 182.

<sup>114</sup> Bowler and McCann, *Recusants in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls 1581-1592*, p. 1.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>116</sup> Rowlands, 'Recusant Women 1560-1640', p. 152.

<sup>117</sup> Weston, *The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, p. 40n.

excommunicated.<sup>118</sup> The exhaustiveness of this document for Warwickshire is unique among the Midlands counties, unfortunately, and the full number of outlawed or excommunicated recusants in other counties cannot be determined.

Outlawry could not be imposed on everyone, however. Married women, who had neither property nor civil rights, could only be 'waived' and the charges dropped.<sup>119</sup> Therefore, a family's property could not be seized if only the matriarch and children refused to subscribe to the Settlement and the later statutes, though children over the age of sixteen could be fined. It is probable that some Catholic families used this loophole to their advantage. This certainly did not eliminate punishment in other forms, but as long as the patriarch of the family attended reformed church services, his property could not be seized. It is possible that the family's eldest son would join his father in this act of conformity while his mother and siblings did not. The 1592 return of recusants in Warwickshire records twenty-six wives of laymen who did not attend reformed church services, though only one was recorded with her children. In addition, eleven wives of laymen were recorded as Warwickshire residents, but were 'unfound'. Again, only one of these women was recorded along with her children.<sup>120</sup> Even with this information, it is not possible to know if these women refused to submit to the Settlement while their husbands conformed in order to evade fines and punishment, or if they simply disagreed with their husbands' religious convictions.

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<sup>118</sup> SP 12/243, f.202, A book containing the second certificates of the Commissioners for the county of Warwick to the Council, November [?] 1592.

<sup>119</sup> Rowlands, 'Recusant Women', p. 152.

<sup>120</sup> SP 12/243, f.202, A book containing the second certificates of the Commissioners for the county of Warwick to the Council, November [?] 1592.

One major issue with regard to the Pipe Rolls and Recusant Rolls is how much of the fine actually found its way into the queen's Exchequer. Not until 1582 did the Exchequer see its first entry from the forfeitures of recusants. These new fines and this new role for the Exchequer proved to be a slow process, one that was supported by the Council, and in particular by Lord Treasurer Burghley. The first returns in the Pipe Rolls in 1582 for England overall came from the forfeitures of lands and are relatively small, £908 15s. 6d. Over the next four years the annual value did increase, with the yearly average of revenue up to 1587 being just over £1,878.<sup>121</sup> Records for recusants for Warwickshire in the Recusant Rolls increase each subsequent year from their inception, but entries in the Pipe Rolls exist only for the years 1587/1588 and 1588/1589.<sup>122</sup> Records in the Recusant Rolls, for example, list five recusants in both 1593/1594 and 1594/1595 in Warwickshire. By 1599, however, there were nineteen recorded in the county and twenty-one in 1603. The increase in recusants fined in the Recusant Rolls contrasts with the first and second commissioners' reports for Warwickshire, though unfortunately without such commissioners' reports for other Midlands counties it is impossible to understand if this was happening throughout the Midlands. It is possible that after a number of years of experience in detecting and fining recusants, the justices of the peace who reported to the Exchequer simply became better at their job, or perhaps more detached from their non-conforming neighbours, and were able to make a more accurate record.

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<sup>121</sup> Bowler, Recusant Roll 2, p. xx.

<sup>122</sup> Bowler and McCann, *Recusants in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls*.

The Recusant Rolls appeared quite late in Elizabeth's reign, beginning only in 1592. The need for a new record of recusant fines, apart from the Pipe Rolls, was agreed upon in the early 1590s, after heightened convictions in the Armada year, 1588.<sup>123</sup> England braced itself for another Armada in 1596; ships left Spain for Ireland, but once again a storm demonstrated a weak link in the fleet. Evidence of the repercussions of this can be seen in the Recusant Rolls. In Warwickshire, there were seven recusants recorded in the Recusant Rolls of 1595/1596 and seventeen in 1596/1597, indicating that the government was eager to know who and where the recusants were.<sup>124</sup> The records from 1595/1596 are identical to those of the previous year in numbers and names, but the relatively drastic jump to seventeen names in 1596/1597 seems to indicate that the government was once again enthusiastic to keep tabs on recusants as the threat of foreign invasion heightened. Even after the threat had subsided, however, the government continued to intensify its vigilance over recusants, and more than twenty recusants were recorded in Warwickshire on the following Roll of 1597/1598. There does not seem to be a pattern in Recusant Roll entries for the Midlands counties. Warwickshire saw an increase in entries, but Staffordshire, which recorded 219 recusants in 1593/1594, only recorded thirteen the following year, and which then rose to 105 in 1596/1597.<sup>125</sup> Worcestershire recorded a similar drop after the first year's entry, from 125 recusants listed in 1593/1594 to thirty-four in 1594/1595, and

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<sup>123</sup> J. Anthony Williams, 'Sources for Recusant History (1559-1791) in English Official Archives', *Recusant History* 16 (1983), p. 367.

<sup>124</sup> E 377/4, Recusant Roll, Warwickshire, 1595/1596, and E 377/5, Recusant Roll, Warwickshire, 1596/1597.

<sup>125</sup> Bowler, Recusant Roll No. 2 (1593-1594), pp. 143-157; Hugh Bowler, Recusant Roll No. 3 (1594-1595) and Recusant Roll No. 4 (1595-1596), *CRS* 61 (1970), pp. 85-88, 215-223.

then rising to sixty-eight in 1595-1596.<sup>126</sup> Northamptonshire recorded twenty-one recusants in 1593/1594, twenty-six the following year and just ten in 1595/1596.<sup>127</sup> Similar fluctuations in numbers were found in Herefordshire, starting at forty-one in 1593/1594, up to sixty-two the following year and then down to fifty-two in 1595/1596.<sup>128</sup> Comparatively few recusants were recorded in Derbyshire, Gloucestershire and Leicestershire, ranging between two in Gloucestershire and Leicestershire, and up to nineteen for 1595/1596 in Derbyshire.<sup>129</sup> The conclusion to be drawn from this is that record keeping on recusancy and enforcement of the laws varied greatly from county to county and year to year.

Some familiar names were carried into the Recusant Rolls from the Pipe Rolls. Some examples for Warwickshire are Margaret Atwood, a widow from Rowington, Elizabeth Ferrers, a widow from Salford Priors, and Thomas Greene, a yeoman from Tanworth. These three were each fined for seven months' recusancy in 1588, all of which went unpaid.<sup>130</sup> In Northamptonshire, Humphrey Marriett of Arthingworth, John Ward, gentleman of Ringstead, William Drewye, yeoman of Thrapston, Edward Roydon, gentleman of Gretton, Henry Tuke, yeoman of Harrowden, and Sir Thomas Tresham of Rushton, were all included in the Pipe Rolls and then also the Recusant Rolls of 1593/1594.<sup>131</sup> Many in

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<sup>126</sup> Bowler, Recusant Roll No. 2, pp. 189-199; Bowler, Recusant Rolls No. 3 & 4, pp. 108-112, 241-245.

<sup>127</sup> Bowler, Recusant Roll No. 2, pp. 113-118; Bowler, Recusant Rolls No. 3 & 4, pp. 64-68, 196-198.

<sup>128</sup> Bowler, Recusant Roll No. 2, pp. 43-50; Bowler, Recusant Rolls No. 3 & 4, pp. 30-35, 153-158.

<sup>129</sup> Bowler, Recusant Roll No. 2, pp. 17-19, 30-33, 87; Bowler, Recusant Rolls No. 3 & 4, pp. 12-13, 22-23, 42-43, 138-140, 148, 178.

<sup>130</sup> Bowler and McCann, Recusants in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls, pp. 12, 61, 71.

<sup>131</sup> Bowler, Recusant Roll 2, pp. 113-118.

Staffordshire, including Erasmus Wolseley, Edward Birche, husbandman of Walsall, Walter Whittall, gentleman of Bloxwich, Edmund Vierz, yeoman of Stoke, Agnes Knowles, widow of Hamstall Ridware, and Edward Birch of Walsall, were included both in the Pipe Rolls and then in the Recusant Rolls.<sup>132</sup> Similarly, many in Worcestershire, including the widow Dorothy Heathe and her son William Heathe of Alchurch, John Middlemore, Esq. of King's Norton, Richard Hill, yeoman of Upton on Severn, and Hugh Ligon, gentleman of Hanley Castle, were recorded in both the Pipe and Recusant Rolls.<sup>133</sup> In Leicestershire the Pipe Roll count went from a total of twenty names to only two in the Recusant Rolls of 1593/1594.<sup>134</sup> As for the other recusants of the Midlands who were recorded in the Pipe Rolls but not the Recusant Rolls, such as Mary Arden of Warwickshire – this was probably the result of a combination of conformity, evasion and death. Repetition of names throughout the twelve years of the Recusant Rolls is very common for Warwickshire. Of the approximately 200 entries in the eleven rolls, there are only about thirty different names, a pattern shared with the other Midlands counties, such as Northamptonshire, Staffordshire and Worcestershire.

One effect of the new statute of 1581 may have been an increase of church papism by the heads of household among recusant families.<sup>135</sup> There were forty married women recorded without their husbands in the second commission for Warwickshire in 1592, including the wives of four esquires and five gentlemen, and it is possible that this was the case in these situations – that the wife absented herself from reformed services along with her children, while her

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<sup>132</sup> Bowler, *Recusant Roll* 2, pp. 143-157.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 189-199.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xliii.

husband attended reformed services in order to avoid fines and forfeiture of two-thirds of his property.<sup>136</sup> Even if some Warwickshire families made this choice, others did not, and the overall revenue from forfeitures of recusant lands in England increased into the Pipe Rolls by 1587.<sup>137</sup> That women were recorded as recusants without their husbands is common in the commissioners' report, but the fact that a name was recorded in the Recusant Rolls meant that he or she had been convicted, and a married woman could not be fined or have lands seized, since by law any money and lands would be the property of her husband. Therefore, only widows and spinsters should be recorded in the Recusant Rolls, not married women, though in practice this was not the case, as a way of recording suspicions about their husbands for future reference. In Staffordshire for 1593/1594, thirty-four married women were recorded in the Recusant Rolls without their husbands.<sup>138</sup>

#### *4.3 Impact*

Given these heavy penalties, many Catholics must have conformed. However, the acts against recusants between 1581 and 1593 seem to have had little effect in influencing the most obstinate of recusants.<sup>139</sup> In the Midlands, recusants managed to remain obstinate through several means; some moved between parishes, counties or even abroad to avoid the commissioners and the justices of

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<sup>136</sup> SP 12/243, f.202, A book containing the second certificates of the Commissioners for the county of Warwick to the Council, November [?] 1592. Only women who were specifically recorded as someone's wife are included in this count. Some women in this document are recorded as neither a wife nor a widow, such as Margaret Atwood, who we know from the Recusant Rolls was a widow in 1592.

<sup>137</sup> Bowler, Recusant Roll No. 2, p. xliii.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 143-156.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

the peace. Henry and Judith Freeman of Tamworth in Warwickshire, for example, fled to Ireland, while Philadelphia Ford of Polesworth fled to Staffordshire.<sup>140</sup> Some racked up fines, such as Thomas Greene of Tanworth, Warwickshire, who was recorded on all the Recusant Rolls of Elizabeth's reign and became indebted to the queen to the tune of £73 6s. 8d.<sup>141</sup> The crown was farming his lands which were worth only £6 13s. 4d. per annum, but he was evidently uninterested in conformity. Others managed to pay part of their recusancy fines, such as Henry Eves and William Huddesford, both of Solihull, who paid their debts of £60 each in 1592/1593.<sup>142</sup> That the government was forced to update and revise the recusancy laws continually is an indication that they initially expected little resistance. It quickly became obvious that imprisonment *en masse* would have little effect, and so fines were significantly increased in order to persuade people into conformity by threatening poverty and loss of livelihood.<sup>143</sup> Evidence shows that these fines were used as a means to secure conformity, not to fund the queen's Exchequer.

Exile was an option that some English Catholics chose, though this could not have been an easy or appealing option. Christopher Buxton, a Derbyshire native and student of Nicholas Garlick, wrote to William Holt at the English College in Rome in June 1587 that English Catholics might wish to consider

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<sup>140</sup> SP 12/243, f.202, A book containing the second certificates of the Commissioners for the county of Warwick to the Council, November [?] 1592.

<sup>141</sup> E 377/11, Recusant Roll 1602/1603, Warwickshire. Thomas Greene is not listed in the commissioners' report of 1592, but his wife, Mary is. 'Marye the wyfe of Thomas Greene, presented theare [Tanworth] for a most willfull Recusante; and Indicted; Is gone a waye from hir husbande, And is as the presenters heere, doo heare, at Stowreton neere Brayles in this Countye; maintayned by Thomas Warkeman; and Marke Warkeman w[ith]out hir husbands consent.

<sup>142</sup> Calthrop, *Recusant Roll I*, p. 351.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xii.



moving to Scotland, because of the freedom allowed Catholics there.<sup>144</sup> Buxton also wrote that he received letters from Paris from Thomas Fitzherbert, the Jesuit from Staffordshire, and also from one 'Mr. Doctor Darbyshire', though Buxton took issue with this man for keeping Fitzherbert in France.<sup>145</sup> England, and even the Midlands, were important points of identity for Catholics, and the necessity or opportunity to leave their natural habitat was often unwelcome. John Ingram, the Jesuit from Stoke Edith, Herefordshire, was the son of a Warwickshire man, and educated in Worcestershire. He carved epigrams into the walls of the Tower of London while he awaited execution. They seem to have all disappeared, but were contemporarily copied by Father Holtby. Ingram recollects the arms of Warwick, Hereford and Worcester, where his family lived and he was brought up:

The lands that binds the bear of my father [Warwick], my mother  
The spear and shield [Hereford], my nurse the land rich in fruits  
[Worcester].<sup>146</sup>

Even facing death Ingram's county and regional identity seems to have been as important as his Catholicism; the quintessential *English* Catholic.

#### *4.4 Conclusion*

The acts known as the Religious Settlement impacted everyone in Elizabethan England. Initially reluctant to seem harsh lest she antagonize Catholics local and abroad, Elizabeth enforced the Religious Settlement with caution during the early years of her reign. This combined with the heightened persecution of the 1580s onwards caused confusion among the Catholic community. Many Catholics

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<sup>144</sup> J.H. Pollen, *Unpublished Documents Relating to the English Martyrs* vol. I (1584-1603) CRS, (1908), p. 147.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 278.

practiced forms of evasion of the anti-Catholic laws in order to escape punishment. By the end of Elizabeth's reign, the number of Catholics within England has been estimated at between one and two percent of the population.<sup>147</sup> By this point, the majority of Catholics seem to have been practising at least partial conformity, and there were many benefits for this for Catholic families, such as respect from neighbours, loyalty to the crown and the availability of local offices. While the numbers of Catholics were greatly reduced by the end of Elizabeth's reign, the Religious Settlement and anti-Catholic laws cannot be considered a complete success. The anti-Catholic laws pressured English Catholics to conform, and this instilled resentment and bitterness into the minority who rejected the Religious Settlement and refused to conform, as can be seen with Midland Catholics such as Thomas Tresham. This resentment reached a boiling point in November 1605 with the Gunpowder Plot, which can be considered the end of Elizabethan Catholicism.

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<sup>147</sup> Marie B. Rowlands (ed.), *English Catholics of Parish and Town, 1558-1778* (Hobbs the Printers: Totton, 1999), p. 23.

## 5. Catholic Thought and Patterns of Devotion: The Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist

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The changes made to religion by the Act of Uniformity must have initially seemed drastic to English Catholics, even as religious rituals such as the sacraments did not witness complete reshaping from their late-medieval uses. Services were in English rather than Latin, and this must have seemed immediately alien. The difference was these sacramental rituals were now untied from the authority of Rome, and the English Church had also removed as sacraments marriage, ordination, last rites, confession (penance) and confirmation. Baptism and the sacrament of the altar (eucharist) remained sacraments in the reformed church, though their symbolic meaning had changed in principle. There was room for conservatism in religion as the Elizabethan Settlement passed by a whisker, was only gradually implemented, contained elements from the past and was enacted within the parish churches where until recently Mass had been said, and which still retained some of the material remnants of the past.<sup>1</sup> This change in authorised religious practice forced those conservative in their religion to reevaluate their interpretation of religious rituals, eventually leading to a consolidation of Catholic identity, defined by non-attendance, or partial

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<sup>1</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 565-593; Norman Jones 'Elizabeth's First Year' in Christopher Haigh (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (London: Macmillan Education, 1984), pp. 27-53.

attendance, at the parish church, and variant and covert religious practice at home. Adaptation and innovation were used by the community as survival mechanisms. It is the lived experience of faith involved that is interesting in this respect, adding to, and complicating, the single fact of Catholic or Protestant allegiance, which in itself might develop gradually, fluctuate or be confounded. To understand Catholic identity as it developed during Elizabeth's reign, it is necessary to place political and ideological allegiance within the context of ritual and devotional practice.

Past research examining whether Catholics either held on to the traditional practices of medieval Catholicism or wholeheartedly accepted the prescribed doctrines of the Council of Trent are unsatisfactory; within such studies, Catholics can be quantified and geographically categorised, but the overall impression is one of decline, because of spiritual starvation.<sup>2</sup> However, the suggestion that the reasons for Catholic decline in the decades following the Act of Uniformity were either because the fractured community clung to tradition or turned to Counter Reformation teachings (and were therefore deprived of spiritual guidance because neither could be sustained in such an environment) overlooks the Catholic Church's resilience and characteristic ability to adjust itself in order to persevere, as demonstrated by the Catholic revival of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and underplays the extent to which Catholicism had been reforming and regenerating since 1500 or earlier.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press Ltd, 1976), and Christopher Haigh, 'The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation', *Past and Present* 93 (1981), pp. 37-69.

<sup>3</sup> Lisa McClain, *Lest We Be Damned: Practical Innovation and Lived Experience among Catholics in Protestant England, 1559-1642* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 6.

Scholars have also neglected devotional tracts as historical sources, discounting the spiritual guidance that Elizabethan Catholics actually used, rather than what had been read in the late-medieval era, or what the European Catholic Church was teaching, presuming that the community would have chosen one over the other. In fact English Catholics were reusing and refurbishing many late-medieval texts whilst at the same time eagerly embracing post-Tridentine literature. Elizabeth Somerville of Edstone, Warwickshire, was found to have a *Horae Beatae Mariae* in 1583, and her book collection was of particular interest to the authorities, as it was she who loaned a particular book to her conspirator brother, John, which encouraged him to attempt an assassination of the queen.<sup>4</sup> The name of this particular book is not recorded in any examination or letter, but it may have been the *Prayers and Meditations* of Luis de Granada, published at Douai in 1576, so she read both pre-Reformation and missionary works.<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth had taken the book from her cousin, according to the confession of her uncle, Edward Grant, who ran a recusant safe house in Norbrook, Warwickshire.<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth showed her brother this book, and his 'mynde was greatlie troubled, insomuche that he could not sleepe: the trouble of his minde was greatlie augmented by the reading of the Bookes according to his owne confession'.<sup>7</sup> So much Reformation-based research has revolved around the socio-political

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<sup>4</sup> SP 12/163 f.140, 'Thomas Wylkes to Burghley, Leicester, and Walsyngham', 7 Nov 1583.

<sup>5</sup> Charlotte C. Stopes, *Shakespeare's Warwick Contemporaries* rev. ed. (Stratford upon Avon: Shakespeare Head, 1907), p. 76; Richard Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare: Studies in Theatre, Religion and Resistance*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p.109. Stephen Greenblatt is sure that this was Elizabeth Somerville's book, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare became Shakespeare* (London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2004), p. 157.

<sup>6</sup> SP 12.163, f.140, 'Thomas Wylkes to Burghley, Leicester, and Walsyngham', 7 Nov 1583.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

impact of the era, and not on the local people themselves.<sup>8</sup> Catholics were forced to adapt, and they did so in varying ways and degrees across England. With the help of English clerics, this adaptation always strove to remain within the boundaries of Catholic doctrine.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, it could be both independent and idiosyncratic. This chapter aims to evaluate how Midlands Catholics used adaptive and innovative means to practice Catholicism without the resources that had previously been available to them.

### *5.1 Change in Rituals*

In the decades following the establishment of the Elizabethan Religious Settlement, organised Catholicism was gradually but ultimately effectively banned, and as such, the Catholic community witnessed the decline of the all-important sacraments that they required for the proper practice of their faith. This was all the more of a shock given how much the Marian Restoration had emphasised the sacraments and the rosary, particularly the Mass.<sup>10</sup> For example, Edmund Bonner, Bishop of London during Mary Tudor's reign, wrote in 1555:

a Sacrament doth signify a mistery, that is to saye, a secret or hydden thyngge apperteynyng to the religion: ... and beyng taken in the larger signification it doth signifye euerye secrete mysterye appertaynyng to religion, and euerye holy thyngge hydden<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Brad S. Gregory, "The "True and Zealouse Seruice of God": Robert Parsons, Edmund Bunny, and *The First Booke of the Christian Exercise*", *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 45 (1994), p. 241.

<sup>9</sup> McClain, *Lest We Be Damned*, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Lucy Wooding, "The Marian Restoration and the Mass", in Eamon Duffy and David Loades (ed.) *The Church of Mary Tudor* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Edmund Bonner, *A profitable and necessary doctrine with certayne homelyes adioyned therunto set forth by the reuerend father in God, Edmund Byshop of London* (London: John Cawood, 1555), p. 44.

And Thomas Watson, Bishop of Lincoln during Mary Tudor's reign, wrote in 1558 that Christ bestowed upon man the:

holye Sacramentes of God, by the woorthie vsing whereof, he powreth abundantlye his many folde graces into our soules, and by them maketh vs people mete to receyue the fruites and benefites of his passion. ... so it is expedient ye be likewise instructed concerning the holye Sacramentes of his church: to thinketh ye might not onelye knowe the maner of Gods working in curinge of your soules, but also prepare and dispose your selues to the fruitful receiuinge of his medicynes whiche be ministred to euery man by his holy Sacramentes.<sup>12</sup>

Sacraments were therefore the vanguard of the Catholic community, an all important weapon against sin. The Catholic Church recognises seven sacraments, as it did in the sixteenth century, all of which must be administered by the clergy, except under extreme circumstances. English men and women were warned to avoid the 'false' sacraments that were discontinued within reformed theology, and this change in authorised religious practice forced English Catholics to reevaluate their interpretation of these rituals. Adaptation and innovation were used by the community as survival mechanisms. John Jewel, along with Thomas Harding, stand out as the champions of the two sides of irreconcilable religious controversy over the sacraments. Jewel's criticism of the Catholic Church, to put it simply, was that it departed from scriptural teachings to practice human and corrupt traditions, such as the sacraments. Harding, writing from Leuven, argued that Jewel was writing in a sensationalist and dishonest manner:

When you haue brought the catholyke church in to contempte, and borne the people in hand, we are not able to proue a number of thinges by you denyed, for lack of such proues, as your self shall allow, in certaine particular pointes of small force ... the triumphing against us and

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas Watson, *Holsome and catholyke doctryne concerninge the seuen Sacramentes of Chrystes Church expedient to be knowen of all men, set forth in maner of shorte sermons to bee made to the people, by the reuerend father in God. Thomas byshop of Lincolne* (London, 1558), fos. ii-iv.

despising the auncient and catholike Religion in general, you may set up a new Religion of your own forging, a new church of your own framing, a new gospel of your own deuise.<sup>13</sup>

This decline of the sacraments became further weighted with crime when the Penal Laws of the 1570s decreed that a priest within the borders of the realm had committed a crime by his mere presence in England.<sup>14</sup> The enthusiasm with which these laws were enforced, as we have seen, fluctuated throughout the reign. The trigger for such enforcement of measures seems to have been almost wholly dependent upon the perception of domestic or foreign threats to Elizabeth and her position as Queen. By the 1580s, when Spanish external threats and the risk of Mary Stuart's presence within England reached boiling point, punishments were heightened further, especially against priests, who now risked death if found within England.<sup>15</sup> These regulations and punishments were the basis of a statute called 'An Act to retain the Queen's Majesty's subjects in their due obedience' (1581). The new laws were harsh by comparison with those of the original Religious Settlement; this statute made absence from reformed services an indictable offence, one that could be tried as a misdemeanour in any criminal court.<sup>16</sup> For the laity, fines and forfeitures for non-attendance at reformed services were intensified. If a recusant was convicted under this

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Harding, *An answer to Maister Iuelles challenge, by Doctor Harding. augmented vvith certaine quotations and additions* (Antwerpe: William Sylvius, 1565), fol. 18 r+v.

<sup>14</sup> Lisa McClain, 'Troubled Consciences: New Understandings and Performances of Penance Among Catholics in Protestant England', *Church History* 82 (2013), p. 91. Geoffrey Elton argued that convicting missionary priests proved especially difficult, until the new acts of the early 1580s. Geoffrey Elton, *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 412.

<sup>15</sup> 23 Eliz. I, c.1.

<sup>16</sup> Hugh Bowler, 'Some Notes of the Recusant Rolls of the Exchequer', *Biographical Studies* 4 (1957), p. 182. For a full transcription of the statute, see Elton, *The Tudor Constitution*, pp. 431-433.



statute, a fine of £20 for every lunar cycle of absence would be imposed, an unimaginable sum for all but the wealthiest Catholics.<sup>17</sup> By the 1590s, Catholics required bonds of surety, and were limited in their travel and movements.<sup>18</sup> In such circumstances, access to a priest became increasingly sporadic and problematic.

Changing levels of proscription could also mean fluctuations in the recognition of Catholic identity. Practical as well as administrative difficulties also arose in enforcing the fine.<sup>19</sup> Before the £20 fine could be applied, it was first necessary to obtain an indictment, which meant that the recusant's guilt had to be proven.<sup>20</sup> The first entries of recusants in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls for 1582 show that the justices enforced the new Recusancy Act severely in some parts of the country, especially in Yorkshire, Hampshire and London.<sup>21</sup> This, however, was not the case in some Midland counties, such as Worcestershire and Warwickshire. There were no entries for recusants from these counties until 1587/1588, the year before the Spanish Armada.<sup>22</sup> It seems that the majority of Midland recusants who are recorded in the Rolls were unable to pay their debts, and instead forfeited their lands and goods. Debts could in theory be cancelled, though this seems to have rarely occurred in the Midlands, the exception being for pre-Elizabethan priests, such as John Bradbury of Stone, Staffordshire, whose

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<sup>17</sup> Elton, *The Tudor Constitution*, p. 412; Bowler, 'Some Notes', pp. 431-433. The fine was previously 12*d.* for each missed service. Lunar cycles (thirteen per annum) were used instead of calendar months because the Exchequer could receive, in theory, one extra payment a year from each recusant.

<sup>18</sup> For the laws, see 13 Eliz I, c.1&2 (Act of Persuasions), 23 Eliz I, c.1; 27 Eliz I, c.2; 29 Eliz I, c.6; and 35 Eliz I, c.2.

<sup>19</sup> Manning, 'Elizabethan Recusancy Commissions', p. 26.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Bowler, 'Some Notes on the Recusant Rolls of the Exchequer', p. 182.

<sup>22</sup> Bowler and McCann, *Recusants in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls*.

eight months of recusancy in 1588 went unpunished.<sup>23</sup> Changes in punishment effected Catholic identity as they were required to adapt both religiously and socially.

The most profound result of these laws on the Catholic hoping to follow religious teachings was the limited access to priests – both on account of their incapacity to progress around England and the laity's ability to travel to them – which drastically reduced the community's access to sacraments. Without the spiritual guidance of a priest, a Catholic was in fear for his or her soul.<sup>24</sup> This was no light matter; after centuries of medieval teaching and practice of the sacrament of confession (penance), priests in Elizabethan England could scarcely be found to perform the sacraments and give absolution, leaving the souls of Elizabethan Catholics in jeopardy. The consequence of this on the community cannot be underestimated.<sup>25</sup> Midland Catholics tried to see a priest when possible, but this was not easy.

Faced with a new model of authorised religious practice which left their own de-legitimised, Catholics were obliged to reconceptualise their modes of religious routine; traditional performance of the sacraments had become undependable, so new innovative ways of receiving sacraments and gaining salvation were required. Catholic sacraments are ritualised acts practiced in the

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<sup>23</sup> Bowler and McCann, *Recusants in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls*, p. 25.

<sup>24</sup> McClain, 'Troubled Consciences', p. 91; Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 57.

<sup>25</sup> On the necessity of a priest to administer the sacrament of Reconciliation, see Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 58-62, 315-316; Thomas N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); Anne Thayer, *Penitence, Preaching and the Coming of the Reformation*, St Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), ch. 1.

physical world with outcomes in the spiritual world.<sup>26</sup> For example, Mass was said by a Catholic priest to reenact the crucifixion of Christ, and the ceremony of taking the Eucharist gave a source of grace to the recipient. The idea that ritualised acts had any impact upon one's status in the afterlife was counterintuitive to the new Protestant teachings in England; even though there was a change in Catholic methods, the aim remained the same. Reformed Eucharistic theory denied the real presence of Christ's body in the communion wafer, insisting it was spiritual, and the Protestant clergy were not, according to the reformed parish, reenacting Christ's death through ritual. Just as pre-Reformation Catholics experienced Mass differently from parish to parish, it is possible that this range was carried through the Reformation, allowing for unorthodox and varying observations.<sup>27</sup> The reformed church also sustained a practice of confession, but the form was non-sacramental and included in the service, rather than individual. The Catholic view was that a medium of communication between earth and heaven was possible through ritualised acts such as the sacraments, along with prayer, while the Protestant church taught that the only channel of communication with the divine was through prayer. Catholics used the sacraments to climb the hierarchical ladder of earthly and celestial intercessors, starting with the parish priest and eventually reaching God. Believers could also access the divine through prayers to the saints, especially the Virgin Mary. The Catholic laity believed that the saints, who were

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<sup>26</sup> Robert Scribner, "The Reformation, Popular Magic and the "Disenchantment of the World"" *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 20 (1993) pp. 478-479.

<sup>27</sup> For pre-Reformation Mass experience, see Duffy, *Striping*, p. 116.

chosen by the church for their holiness, had a direct channel to God; they could direct earthly prayers to God.<sup>28</sup>

The sacraments, especially the Mass, had gained in importance during the Tudor era; they were the touchstone of Catholicism under Henry VIII and central to the Marian restoration.<sup>29</sup> The late-medieval church, the Council of Trent and English post-Tridentine literature stressed the importance of grace through the sacraments. Doubtless in better circumstances the English Catholic community would have found little need to stray from the prescribed teachings and familiar rituals, but with the restrictions in place the community chose to adapt rather than conform. This suggests that English Catholics were encouraged to reconceptualise the sacraments in innovative ways in order to keep some semblance of the traditional faith intact. This encouragement is evident from the source material, but can be decidedly more tricky to find in practice among the Catholic community.

Literature was printed for the laity by priests and clergy in an effort to tend to them *in absentia*. Catholics were counseled on how to participate in the sacraments without the presence of a priest. The fact that this was a particularly reformed method of religious practice was not lost on the Catholic priests, and to compensate for any uneasiness, they sanctioned these recommendations on the church's ancient approach of alternative methods of receiving grace on the occasion of an emergency. It seems clear that English Catholics were able to reconceptualise the Catholic sacraments in innovative ways in order to keep

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<sup>28</sup> McClain, *Lest We Be Damned*, p. 32.

<sup>29</sup> Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 116; Lucy Wooding, 'Remembrance in the Eucharist', in Andrew Gordon and Thomas Rist (eds.), *The Arts of Remembrance in Early Modern England: Memorial Cultures of the Post-Reformation* (Suffolk: Ashgate, 2013, pp. 19-36.

some semblance of the traditional faith intact. Allison and Rogers catalogue 932 Catholic books that were printed either secretly in England or abroad and smuggled into England, all in English.<sup>30</sup>

## 5.2 Sacrament of Penance

In the pre-Reformation church, it seems that most parishioners confessed once a year, during Lent, but there is a fair amount of evidence that, by the coming of the sixteenth century, pious laypeople were confessing more often, and using the sacrament as a spiritual guide.<sup>31</sup> By this period, a large selection of penitential literature was available in England.<sup>32</sup> The English method of Confession that was included in popular primers in pre-Reformation England gave the reader a quick preparation for confession, checking through the deadly sins and the commandments.<sup>33</sup> After annual confession was forced upon the laity by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, sacramental confession was thence to be made to the parish priest. This was a bittersweet responsibility for the clergy, as Eamon Duffy has noted.<sup>34</sup> While the parish priest could now personally determine the religious knowledge and spiritual health of the penitent, this was also coupled with the demand of being able to help them to absolution. The clergy had to understand the varying degree of sins, and suggest an appropriate penance. To help both the clergy and laity traverse this new sacramental act,

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<sup>30</sup> Allison and Rogers', *A Catalogue of Catholic Books in English Printed Abroad or Secretly in England, 1558-1640*, first published in *Biographical Studies*, 1534-1829, 3 (1955-1956).

<sup>31</sup> See Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>32</sup> See John Mirk, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, Edward Peacock (ed.) for the Early English Texts Society (London, 1902).

<sup>33</sup> Edgar Hoskins, *Horae beatae Mariae virginis or Sarum and York primers with kindred books and primers of the reformed Roman use* (London, 1901), p. 133.

<sup>34</sup> Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 54.

medieval writers used confession as inspiration to equip both the laity and clergy with their confessional responsibilities.<sup>35</sup>

Through ordination, Catholic priests became Christ's representatives on earth, and therefore acted as a medium of bestowing grace onto parishioners. Without the sacrament of ordination, priests were no different from the laity, and unable to confer the remaining sacraments or act as an intermediary for God. This ancient belief was based on scripture, and confirmed by the Council of Trent.<sup>36</sup> For a Catholic layperson to go outside of these decrees and practice the Catholic faith without the guiding intercession of a priest was equivalent to denying one's self salvation. Whenever adaptations were made, the clergy must play a role in the change.<sup>37</sup>

The late-medieval English Church had emphasised the indispensable value of the sacrament of penance as a means towards grace. Parishioners were encouraged to examine their conscience, confess to a priest and receive absolution, then perform the recommended penance, after which the penitent would return, at least briefly, to a state of innocence. Confession and penance was required of medieval parishioners at least once a year, but because of the solemnity with which late-medieval English men and women took the absolution of sin for the sake of their immortal souls, it has been argued that the English laity likely sought confession more frequently than this.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Matt. 16: 18-20; J. Waterworth (ed. And trans.), *The Council of Trent The canons and decrees of the sacred and ecumenical Council of Trent* (London: Dolman, 1848), 732-733, 743.

<sup>37</sup> McClain, *Lest We Be Damned*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>38</sup> Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 60.

Medieval priests frequently preached on sin, and the need for confession and penance, lest the immortal soul be endangered.<sup>39</sup> Priests' powers to absolve parishioners of their sins were derived from Biblical verse. John 20:21-3 records that Jesus said:

Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'<sup>40</sup>

The Council of Trent endorsed this passage in Session 14:

But the acts of the penitent himself, namely, contrition, confession and satisfaction, constitute the matter of this sacrament, which acts, inasmuch as they are by God's institution required in the penitent for the integrity of the sacrament and for the full and complete remission of sins, are for this reason called the parts of penance.<sup>41</sup>

This is significant as it suggests there are grounds for penance without a priest. Therefore, with both traditional and contemporary declarations on the validity and necessity of confession and penance in mind, the Catholic community would have found it unthinkable to neglect the practice altogether. With the difficulties of receiving direct pastoral care from a Catholic priest, however, it became problematic to tend to this spiritual obligation. Priests looked to late-medieval literature, such as the *Book of Hours*, and literature from the Marian restoration to counsel Elizabethan Catholics, for from the late fifteenth century there had been printed a large body of lay-penitential works to deliver spiritual advice for the sacrament of penance, such as Thomas a Kempis's *Imitatio Christi* and

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<sup>39</sup> Anne Thayer, *Penitence, Preaching*, pp. 54, 69-70; Dairmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 14-15.

<sup>40</sup> *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Publishers, 2011).

<sup>41</sup> Council of Trent, Session 13, *Canones de sacramento confirmationis*, 3 (November 1551).

Richard Whitford's works such as *Certaine deuout and godly petitions, communly called, Iesus Psalter*, which continued to be printed during Elizabeth's reign.

These medieval primers recommended personal self-examination of sins.

For example, the *Horae Eboracenses* encouraged the laity to:

In thy bedde chambre or other secret place moche and often tymes thinke by thy selfe, where, how, whan, with whome, how many tymes and how enormly thou hast synned, whether in spekyng, consent, wyl or deede...And whan thou dilygently by thy selfe hast dycussed and consydered all thynges, than go thou to the preest with grete reuerence.<sup>42</sup>

This was a type of independent and reflective rehearsal made before the true confession, and as such was still not entirely practical for Elizabethan Catholics, because a priest was still needed for validation (although the *Horae* does describe confession as 'the declaracyon of synne before a preest, or any other in necessity').<sup>43</sup> Also, the primers did not suggest any forms of penance, regardless of the severity of sins committed; this fell too much within the scope of priestly authority over medieval parishioners, but was another area that English Catholic authors and laity would have had to manoeuvre around and possibly reconceptualise.<sup>44</sup> William Stanney encouraged this form of 'self-confession' in the early seventeenth century:

by the consideration of the goodnesse of God, and for his sake embraced... perfect contrition, is not onely a speciall gift of God, and a diuine inspiration of the holie Ghost, but of it selfe is sufficient to iustifie and blot out all deadlie offences, before the penitent be actually absolved. Yet this iustification and reconciliation, must be ascribed precisely to contrition, but in as much as it includes the desire of the sacrament of Penance, which the penitent is bounde to receaue finding oportunitie.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Horae Eboracenses: The Book of Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (Durham: Surtees Society, CXXXII, 1920), pp. 148-149.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>44</sup> Duffy, *Stripping*, pp.58-65; and Mirk, *Instructions for Parish Priests*

<sup>45</sup> William Stanney, *A Treatise of Penance* (Douai: John Heigham, 1617), p. 65-66.



Jennifer Bryan suggests that this seventeenth century practice was not entirely new. Her research has shown that there was a late-medieval move towards more individualism in meditation, prayer and penance, and post-Reformation Catholics were able to build on this.<sup>46</sup> Augustine Baker wrote of this, 'It is often far more profitable to exercise virtual acts of contrition by turning directly to God with love, then by reflecting with fear and remorse on their sins.'<sup>47</sup> Baker wrote in 1657: 'The administration of the Sacrament is left by our Lord to priests, who alone are judges as to the character of the sins confessed, and how they are to be confessed.'<sup>48</sup> There was room for interpretation here, however, for Baker also claimed that: 'The Sacrament of Penance is a holy institution ordained by God, not to torture but to relieve conscience, and to bring souls to a sense of confidence in God', and,

These timid souls, then, should be taught that: The end of the consecration of themselves to God in a contemplative life was not so much to enjoy the sacraments, which they might have freely used in the world, but to seek God in silence, quietness and solitude, and to tend to him daily by the internal exercises of love and resignation, and by quieting and restraining every passion.<sup>49</sup>

Baker's argument is that one can over-do confession, and overthink one's sins. Confession is not meant to be a way of offloading frequent sin, for 'Souls... that nourish their fears and scruples by frequent unpermitted confessions have much to answer for before Almighty God.'<sup>50</sup> By this they are making a perfect union with God impossible, forsaking the ways of obedience. To Baker, frequent

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<sup>46</sup> Jennifer Bryan, *Looking inward: devotional reading and the private self in late medieval England* (Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

<sup>47</sup> Blundell, *Contemplative Prayer*, p. 178.

<sup>48</sup> Dom B. Weld-Blundell, *Contemplative Prayer: Ven. Father Augustine Baker's Teaching Thereon From "Sancta Sophia"* (T&T Washbourne: London, 1907), p. 178.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 177-178.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

confession smacked of impiety, desperation, and the inability to distinguish between venial and mortal sins. He says a simple self-examination will tell one the difference in already committed sins. He compared the situation in post-Reformation England with that of early Christianity,

We know that in ancient days innumerable saints attained the perfection with little or no use of confession. They had recourse to the serious practice of prayer, abstraction, and mortification; and doubtless these means will be as effectual now as they were then; without them, confessions and communions, though practiced daily, will produce little fruit.<sup>51</sup>

In the Catholic high regard for the sacrament, the Jesuit Robert Parsons wrote:

Whoe coulde eate or drinke, or sleepe quietlie in his bed vntill by the holy sacrament of penance, he had discharged his conscience of mortall synne?<sup>52</sup>

This is not to suggest that English Catholics would not rely upon a priest had one been present, or even that self-confession was regarded as equal to confession to a priest. We know that missionary priests went to great and dangerous efforts to provide sacraments, often disguised or hiding within the home of a wealthy recusant family, thus enabling Catholics within the estate and parish to receive guidance as well.<sup>53</sup> For example, Campion wrote about his time at Harrowden,

I ride about some piece of country every day. ... On horseback I meditate my sermon; when I come to the house, I polish it. Then I talk with such as come to speak with me, or hear their confessions. In the morning, after

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Parsons, *The First Booke of the Christian Exercise* (Rouen, 1582), p. 82.

<sup>53</sup> This has been well documented by scholars. See: Bossy, *The English Catholic Community*; Jessie Childs, *God's Traitors: Terror and Faith in Elizabethan England* (London: The Bodley Head, 2014); Haigh, 'The Continuity of Catholicism'; Alice Hogge, *God's Secret Agents* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005); Michael C. Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c. 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Mass, I preach. They hear with exceeding greediness and very often receive the sacrament.<sup>54</sup>

On 21 December 1586, Robert Southwell wrote to the Jesuit Superior Claudio Aquaviva addressing the lack of sacramental objects in England,

I earnestly do beg your Paternity to have sent unto us those faculties we sought for, especially to consecrate chalices and superaltars. Of this there is a very great need, for that by reason of these long searchings of houses, many such things have fallen into the hands of the pursuivates, so we are in great want.<sup>55</sup>

Contemporary evidence makes it clear that these priests felt an obligation to administer the sacraments as often as possible.<sup>56</sup>

While efforts were paid to removing the Catholic community from Protestant services, the incompatible instinct to acclimatise to the reality of the official religion in order to survive is obvious in the texts written by missionary priests for Elizabethan Catholics.<sup>57</sup> This innovation on part of the Catholic community and clergy was pioneering and quite avant-garde; it differed not only from late-medieval teaching and practice of the sacraments, but also from the new Tridentine and English Protestant teachings and interpretations. English Catholics were willing to experiment with a range of combinations of late-medieval and post-Tridentine teachings. This suggests that these attempts to alter both traditional (medieval) and new (Tridentine) practices indicates a 'degree of flexibility' that normally goes unrecognised in the scholarship of post-Reformation English Catholicism; historians usually choose between the schools

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<sup>54</sup> Richard Simpson, *Edmund Campion: A Biography* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1867), p. 247.

<sup>55</sup> J. H. Pollen, 'Unpublished Documents relating to the English Martyrs, 1584-1603' *Catholic Record Society* 5 (1908), p. 314.

<sup>56</sup> For examples of missionary priests hearing confessions, see Richard Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests* (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne Ltd, 1924), pp. 29, 42, 68, 73, 154, 194, 383, 396, 410, 464, 476.

<sup>57</sup> Peter Holmes, 'Elizabethan Casuistry' *The Catholic Record Society* 67 (1981).

of Bossy's 'Change' or Haigh's 'Continuity' theories.<sup>58</sup> Scholars have frequently neglected the subtle and varying degrees of acceptance or refusal among the English Catholic community to both medieval and Tridentine teachings that could not be easily practiced within their current situation. In this light, it is illogical to assume that Catholics either adhered to the habitual medieval practices of the past, or enthusiastically acknowledged the rigid Tridentine decrees and requirements on the sacraments. There were too few priests in England to persevere with the late-medieval Catholic practices, or to enact the supplemental Counter-Reformation teachings. Experimentation and innovation, it must have seemed, were the only way forward.<sup>59</sup>

Apart from the sacraments, English Catholics remained devoted to indulgences, despite their ban. The Catholic Catechism taught that an indulgence was a remission of the temporal punishment of sins, which is undergone in life and in purgatory. Penance and indulgences are connected, therefore, as they are one and the same. A Shropshire man, John Harrison, was arrested in London in 1596 in possession of an indulgence, as well as a relic of bone, a set of rosary beads, and pictures of the pope and saints. Harrison claimed that he had found the indulgence, but whether this was the truth or a prudent fabrication is not known. Considering its papal associations, possessing an indulgence was paramount to treason. The fact that he kept it, however, (assuming he had found it, rather than obtained it for himself) demonstrates that he knew that the

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<sup>58</sup> See John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1975) and Christopher Haigh, 'The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation,' *Past and Present* 93 (1981) pp. 37-69.

<sup>59</sup> McClain, 'Troubled Consciences', p. 94.

remittance of time in purgatory given by the indulgence was transferrable to whomever had custody of it, suggesting how highly it was valued.<sup>60</sup>

Literature written by English clerics on the rosary also underwent a change in interpretation during Elizabeth's reign. The Society of the Rosary was promoted, encouraging Catholic community and identity. Prayers on the rosary, a sacramental item, were transformed into a type of indulgence. Rome tried to make rosaries accessible to English Catholics through the Confraternity of the Rosary, facilitating the rewards of indulgences affiliated with those praying the rosary.<sup>61</sup> Praying the rosary was one way English clerics encouraged Catholics to keep physical contact with traditional religion.<sup>62</sup> It is possible that the rosary became a substitute for a sacramental experience.

Much evidence that the English Catholic laity sought to confess comes from the priests themselves, either directly or indirectly. Margery Throckmorton of Coughton Court, Warwickshire, was confessed by a priest before her journey to the Continent to become a nun.<sup>63</sup> John Somerville of Edstone, Warwickshire, asked his father-in-law's priest, Hugh Hall, to hear his confession and give him the sacrament, hoping the acts would ease his troubled mind.<sup>64</sup> Imprisoned

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<sup>60</sup> SP 12/256, f. 167, Examination of John Harrison, 3 March 1596.

<sup>61</sup> *A chayne of twelve links. To wit XII Catholick conditions concerning certain graces & indulgences, of christes Catholick church...Translated out of Italian and into English by I.W. Whereunto are annexed, the indulgences graunted unto the Society of the Rosary...together with those that are geven to holy grayness, crosses & medals of the English pardon, & the pardon of Boromeus* (n.p., 1617), pp. 101-102.

<sup>62</sup> McClain, *Lest we be Damned*, p. 105-106.

<sup>63</sup> SP 12/173/1, f.40, 'Sir Hugh Cholmondeley and others to Walsingham', 25 September 1584.

<sup>64</sup> SP 12/163, f.67, 'John Somerfeld's answer to interrogatories', 31 October, 1583. Hugh Hall refused to confer the sacraments on Somerville, in the vain hope that withholding them would deter him from his known plan to travel to London

priests could counsel and absolve laypersons in prisons, and free priests visited prisons to care for the spiritual needs of both incarcerated laity and clergy.<sup>65</sup> The Jesuit John Gerard, whose mission brought him to the Midlands in the 1590s, recorded that the laity approached him specifically to confess and receive penance.<sup>66</sup> On the way to their executions in 1582, William Lacy and Richard Kirkemen, Yorkshire priests, made their confessions to each other.<sup>67</sup> James Fenn returned to his home county of Somersetshire after ordination at Douai, where he enthusiastically took it upon himself to reconcile imprisoned pirates to the Catholic faith through 'repentance and confession'.<sup>68</sup> Oxford native George Nichols reconciled and confessed a 'noted highwayman' imprisoned in Oxford Castle. The Catholic inmates encouraged this prisoner to prepare a confession through private prayer, and Nichols heard his official confession on the morning of his execution.<sup>69</sup> In strained circumstances, prisons could take the place of churches. As well as confession, some Catholics could enjoy Mass while imprisoned. The Jesuit William Weston wrote:

Sometimes, also, we were able to fix a time and place for Mass. Then secretly in the middle of the night we would lower a rope to the room below, which was occupied by Catholics, and draw up the sacred vestments. Early in the morning, when Mass was over and before the

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to kill Elizabeth I. Somerville believed he would die on his mission, but Hall thought he would not attempt it without being confessed.

<sup>65</sup> McClain, 'Troubled Consciences', p. 98-99; Patrick McGrath and Joy Rowe, 'The Imprisonment of Catholics for Religion under Elizabeth I', *Recusant History* 20 (1991), p. 424.

<sup>66</sup> Philip Caraman (trans.), *The Autobiography of a Hunted Priest* (New York: Image Books, 1955), pp. 46-47, 50, 60, 64.

<sup>67</sup> Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests* (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne Ltd, 1924), p. 68.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

other prisoners and wardens were awake, we would let the rope down again in the same way.<sup>70</sup>

That Catholics were able to enjoy a reliable and continuous religious and spiritual practice during incarceration has been well documented.<sup>71</sup> Some priests enjoyed more comforts in their incarceration than they had tramping the countryside. William Freeman, a seminary priest whose mission was mainly in Warwickshire and Worcestershire, was visited by a Catholic friend while imprisoned in 1595, and they 'joked merrily about the bolts on his legs.'<sup>72</sup> However, the majority of Catholic laypersons did not have this unexpected advantage of priestly care while in prison, and had to manage their faith outside of orthodox methods.

The missionary clergy, recognising the problem, composed and issued spiritual guides to English Catholics. An unnamed priest gave a book to one Goodacre of Fetter Lane, London, so he could teach himself to confess. This same Goodacre is said to have gone to Mass every Sunday at the Marshalsea, and also at a house in Hoxton, where Thomas Tresham also had a home – the pursuivante Ben Beard made this connection himself in a letter to the Lord Keeper Puckering in 1594.<sup>73</sup> These guides offered advice on how they could use techniques of self-examination of their own consciences, in a similar way to medieval methods mentioned above. Something had changed, however; medieval laity could self-examine in order to prepare themselves for their opportunity to confess directly to a priest, but they had never been encouraged to self-confess. The needs of the

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<sup>70</sup> Philip Caraman (trans.), *William Weston: The Autobiography of an Elizabethan* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1955), p. 117.

<sup>71</sup> See McGrath and Rowe, 'The Imprisonment of Catholics', esp. pp. 424-428.

<sup>72</sup> Pollen, 'Unpublished Documents', p. 345.

<sup>73</sup> SP 12/248, f.250, Notes by Lord Keeper Puckering from the information of Ben. Beard on the names of Catholics, 24 May 1594.

English Catholic laity could simply not be put in line with Roman orthodoxy, and works written by Catholic priests on the Continent must be read differently from those written by missionary priests in England, where the readership was subject to perilous restrictions. These clerical authors, recognising the limitations and the practical difficulties faced by the laity, adapted the methods of receiving the sacraments, to meet the needs of the English Catholics.<sup>74</sup> Edward Barlow, though preaching during the Stuart dynasty (he was professed at Douai in 1615), kept very old traditions during his mission in Lancashire. Before the major holy days of the Catholic calendar, Catholics would travel to him, to pass ‘the night after the manner of the Primitive Church, in watching, prayer, and spiritual colloquies; whilst for his part he was employed almost all the night in hearing confessions.’<sup>75</sup>

Missionary priests maintained that salvation could be granted without the sacraments, especially in dire cases. John Radford, a Jesuit from Derbyshire, wrote in 1605 that, while it had been commanded by Christ that the faithful must confess their sins to a priest, there was an exception:

But if a man be in danger of death, or in such place that hee cannot come possibly by any meane to co[n]fession before a Priest: then no doubt if he haue perfect contrition and sorow for his sins, Christ the high Priest (who as I saied before is not so bound to his Sacrame[n]tes but that without them he can giue his grace) giueth in such time of necessitie perfect absolution from sinne, yea so great the sorow of hart may bee that both sinne, yea and paine due vnto sinne in this life, and in the next may bee forgiuen. And I doubt not but that there be many good men that perhappes come to Confession once euerye weeke; that before they confesse to the Preist haue their sinnes forgiuen at Godes hands. <sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> McClain, ‘Troubled Consciences’, p. 99.

<sup>75</sup> Challoner, *Memoirs*, p. 396.

<sup>76</sup> John Radford, *A Directorie Teaching the Way to the Truth in a Brief and Plaine Discourse against the heresies of this time* (n.p. [England] 1605), p. 105.



Radford also wrote:

We graunt that in what howre soeuer a sinner with due repentance, or contrite sorow and compunction of harte conuerted himselfe to God, he would forgiue him, yea and moreouer wee graunt the same still now in this law of grace since Christ that when-soeuer a man hath perfecte contrition, or sorrow for his sinnes, they be forgiuen him.<sup>77</sup>

Writings such as these demonstrated to English Catholics that they possessed the ability to confer with God directly in times of crisis, and would be granted absolution, though Radford stresses that 'in due time he wil confesse the[m] [to a priest]'.<sup>78</sup> The Catholic controversialist Thomas Wright wrote that God had bestowed upon man many 'internal gifts', which included the 'grace of the Holy Spirit', so man could redeem himself.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, later in the seventeenth century, Augustine Baker's chapter in the *Sancta Sophia* on prayers for the sick, neither a priest nor extreme unction are mentioned at all. Internal prayer, according to Baker, increased the divine virtues of the soul.<sup>80</sup> Rather, Christians must prepare themselves for a fearless death,

Above all things, the soul must be deeply impressed with the truth that sickness will not justify the neglect of her [the soul's] exercises of mortification and prayer, the essential duties of an external life. These are necessary in sickness as in health, and if they are neglected the soul will become the more sick of the two, and exposed to greater danger than the body.<sup>81</sup>

Sickness was an opportunity to practice contemplative prayer in order to trust God, for: 'the soul must not think that God has sent her the trial of sickness to dispense her from her daily recollections, but rather that she may pursue them

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Mind in General* (New York: Garland, 1986), pp. 319-320.

<sup>80</sup> Blundell, *Contemplative Prayer*, p. 210.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 338.

more efficaciously.’<sup>82</sup> The practice of self-examination of one’s own conscience needed little alteration, but the next steps urged by the late-medieval and Tridentine authorities – confession to a priest and subsequent acts of penance – needed remodeling in the English setting. English missionary priests encouraged traditional self-examination followed by confession directly to God, and then a self-enforced act of penance when the layperson had no access to a priest.<sup>83</sup>

### *5.3 Sacrament of the Eucharist*

While Jewel wrote of the Mass, ‘If there be any here that have had or yet have any good opinion of the mass, I beseech you for God’s sake, even as you tender your own salvation, suffer not yourselves willfully to be led away, run not blindly to your own confusion’, Mass was a way in which Catholics could work towards salvation; one could not come without the other.<sup>84</sup> Through Mass they also identified with Christ by seeing, and sometimes touching and tasting His body if they took the Eucharist.<sup>85</sup> The purpose of the Mass was standard throughout late-medieval England, but research has found that it is impossible to talk of a single type of experience of the Mass.<sup>86</sup> This may be another reason why Elizabethan Catholics were tolerant and accepting to alternative practices, rather than those prescribed; they were already used to variations. Past scholarship shows that devotion to the sacrament of the Eucharist grew after the reforms of Henry VIII, as the English Catholic understanding of Mass changed on account of the intellectual effect of humanism, and as a rallying point in the face of

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 339, 345.

<sup>83</sup> McClain, ‘Troubled Consciences’, p. 101.

<sup>84</sup> John Jewel, *Sermon at St Paul’s 1559*.

<sup>85</sup> McClain, *Lest we be Damned*, p. 109.

<sup>86</sup> Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 116.

Protestant attack.<sup>87</sup> Like confession, the laity could not receive the Eucharist without a priest; it was a priest who consecrated the bread and wine into Christ's body and blood, and a priest who either administered the wafer to the laity, or, by ingesting it himself, conferred the benefit of the sacrifice to the congregation who did not communicate.<sup>88</sup> For the laity, to see the physical Eucharist was also a means to salvation, but for those to whom this was frequently impossible, Augustine Baker had an improvised method: 'Such souls will do well often to practice spiritual communion, preparing themselves for it by the method suggested above [a prayer]. The frequent practice of this will give increase of confidence.'<sup>89</sup>

Like confession, the sacrament of the Eucharist witnessed not a ritualistic change, but a methodological one. Casuist texts suggested that Mass could be said anywhere except on a body of water.<sup>90</sup> Gentry homes such as Harrowden Hall still had altars within chapels, but this was now the exception, and it was security that became the most important factor rather than the aesthetics. At Stanley Grange, a house that Anne Vaux used as a school in Derbyshire, a pursuivant found: 'two chapels, one opening into the other, and in either of them a table set to the upper end for an altar, and stools and cushions laid out as though there had been lately a Mass. Over the altars there were crucifixes set and other pictures about it.'<sup>91</sup> The major adaptation of the sacraments took shape in the shift from the authorised form and practice to the function of the sacrament,

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<sup>87</sup> Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism*, p. 83.

<sup>88</sup> McClain, *Lest we be Damned*, p. 111; for a detailed account of how medieval English parishioners viewed Mass, see Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 93-101.

<sup>89</sup> Blundell, *Contemplative Prayer*, p. 185.

<sup>90</sup> Holmes, 'Elizabethan Casuistry', p. 4.

<sup>91</sup> John Charles Cox, *Three Centuries of Derbyshire Annals* vol 1 (London: Bemrose & Sons, 1890), p. 284.

and the spiritual result found therein. The missionary priests and clerical authors understood the need for this innovation, and encouraged new methods of sacramental practise. Alexandra Walsham has proposed that missionary priests ‘modified, softened and actively resisted’ the Counter-Reformation’s strict instruction to isolate themselves from their Protestant neighbours, such as Laurence Vaux’s call to recusancy.<sup>92</sup> Again, this may not have been a novel concept to members of the Catholic community, who, according to Lucy Wooding, had refashioned their own beliefs on doctrine in the 1530s and 1540s, in an attempt to persuade Henry VIII back to Catholicism, and to reconfigure their faith under the influences of humanism and the vitality of late medieval lay religion.<sup>93</sup> In this regard, flexibility could be used. Regeneration began with the clergy, and ‘reform’ could take a different shape than what had been expected; for example, Mass could be celebrated without vestments or chalices, or in areas not necessarily deemed ‘sacred’.<sup>94</sup> Perhaps most significantly, accommodation could be made to parishioners who, from time to time, conformed and attended reformed services, for priests to offer them confession and other sacraments.<sup>95</sup> Peter Holmes suggests that William Allen wanted his missionary priests trained to be able to adapt to the English restrictions, so they could effectively tend to

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<sup>92</sup> Alexandra Walsham, ‘Yielding to the extremity of the time: conformity, orthodoxy and the post-Reformation Catholic Community’, in Peter Lake and Michael Questier (eds.) *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560-1660* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2000), p. 263; see also Walsham, *Church Papists*, chapter 3; Laurence Vaux, *A Catechism, or Christian Doctrine* (reprinted from the 1583 edition for The Chetham Society, 1885), pp. 5-7.

<sup>93</sup> Lucy Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 49, 271.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139-140; Peter Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise: The Political Thought of the Elizabethan Catholics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 117-119.

<sup>95</sup> Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise*, p. 100; McClain, *Lest we be Damned*, p. 45; Walsham, *Church Papists*, pp. 65-66.

the community. Pragmatism, not stubbornness, was the way to maintain Catholicism in England.<sup>96</sup>

The Jesuit mission, according to Bossy, aimed at renewing Catholicism in England; but a Catholicism that differed from late-medieval tradition by being less ritualistic and more spiritual.<sup>97</sup> However, neither Robert Southwell nor Robert Parsons, the two most prolific English Jesuit authors, sanctioned self-examination and penance as an acceptable alternative to the sacrament.<sup>98</sup> This may have applied more to the Catholic community below the social rank of gentry, since evidence suggests that Jesuit missionaries were based at gentry family estates; the presence of a Jesuit negated the need for adapted forms of the sacraments.<sup>99</sup> Works such as Southwell's *A Short Rule of Good Life* and Parsons' *A Christian Directorie*, were intended for English Catholics, as they were written in English, and considered the religious persecution they faced. Southwell, writing to the Jesuit Superior Claudio Aquaviva in 1586, grieved over the loss of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. He believed:

Of a truth, one remaining solace of the Catholics amid all this trouble and turmoil is to refresh themselves with the bread of heaven, which if it be taken away, it cannot be that many will faint and grow feeble, whose piety and constancy was heretofore nourished and increased at his table.<sup>100</sup>

Southwell could not imagine a world where the Catholic faith could be sustained outside either late-medieval or Tridentine teachings.

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<sup>96</sup> Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise*, p. 100.

<sup>97</sup> Bossy, *The English Catholic Community*, pp. 16-20.

<sup>98</sup> Robert Southwell, *A Short Rule of Good Life* (St Omers, 1622); Robert Parsons, *A Christian Directory, Guiding Men to their Eternal Salvation* (orig. 1582, repr. Dublin, 1767).

<sup>99</sup> Marie B. Rowlands, 'Recusant Women 1560-1640', in Mary Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society 1500-1800* (Methuen: London, 1985), p. 157.

<sup>100</sup> J.H. Pollen, 'Unpublished Documents', pp. 313-314.

Jesuit treatises were also intended for the masses. Brad Gregory argues, counter to Haigh's theory, that even Jesuit devotional literature was meant to circulate among the entire community.<sup>101</sup> For example, Robert Parsons begins his work *The First Booke of the Christian Exercise*, by saying that his goal is 'to perswade a Christian by name, to become a trewe Christian in deed, at the leaste, in resolution of mynde.'<sup>102</sup> This work was meant for those Catholics who had chosen conformity, not solely for fortified recusant gentry families. The sacraments are mentioned in the *Exercise*, but they are not a predominant topic, and the book is geared more towards the individual rather than the community.<sup>103</sup> In fact, the practices in the *Exercise* were so reformed in nature, that Protestants used a version of it for their own spiritual benefit.<sup>104</sup> To Parsons, piety was directly linked to doctrine, and he wrote that 'so manye seditious innouations' to the Roman Church would damage upright Christian practice.<sup>105</sup> The Jesuits also practiced a form of self-examination, based on medieval monastic exercises and the *devotio moderna*. 'Consideration' is a theme of Parsons' *Exercise*:

Consideration is the keye whiche openeth the doore to the closet of our harte, where all our books of accompte doe lye. It is the looking glasse, or rather the very eye of our soule, whereby shee seethe her selfe, and lookethe into all her whole estate...And without this consideration, shee runnethe on blindlye into a thousand brakes and bryers, stumbling at euery steppe, and continuallie in peril of some greate and deadlie mischief.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Gregory, 'Parsons and Bunny', p. 243.

<sup>102</sup> Parsons, *Exercises*, p. 11.

<sup>103</sup> Gregory, 'Parsons and Bunny', p. 243.

<sup>104</sup> See Robert McNulty, "'The Protestant Version' of Robert Parsons' *The First Book of Christian Exercise*' *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 22 (1959), pp. 271-330.

<sup>105</sup> Parsons, *Exercises*, p. 2.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20

The clerical authors who promoted adapted forms of the sacraments were following the traditional Roman Catholic 'exception to the rule' clause for extreme circumstances. Catholic teaching had always allowed for some manoeuvrability for grace directly given by God, for example for the baptism of infants in the birthing chamber (mediated by the midwife), and men and women could make their own last confession if they found themselves dying alone.<sup>107</sup> English clerical authors emphasised these official teachings, in order to comfort the laity (and perhaps themselves) that they were neither opposing nor neglecting Catholic doctrine, nor challenging the role of priests in conferring the sacraments, which continued to be the preferred method of absolution. After all, it made little sense to save a soul through self-confession all the while damning it by straying from Catholic boundaries. The exception to the rule condition was meant to be used in extreme circumstances, but the enormous struggle for English Catholics to win access to a priest was no longer a rarity, but rather the norm.<sup>108</sup>

The suggestions that the English clerics made to enable the Catholic community to manoeuvre through the post-Reformation period were based upon the laity's acceptance of the new Catholic practices, and there is some evidence that this was generally recognised by the community, rather than being dismissed as unorthodox. Take for example Richard Simpson, a missionary priest born in Yorkshire but ministering mainly in Derbyshire, where he was arrested in 1588. Fearing the awful execution that awaited him, Simpson conformed to the reformed church while incarcerated, so traditional accounts of Simpson say,

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<sup>107</sup> McClain, 'Troubled Consciences', p. 108; *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967) xii, p. 996.

<sup>108</sup> McClain, 'Troubled Consciences', p. 109.

expecting a stay of execution.<sup>109</sup> A poem, written by a witness to the execution, suggests that Simpson's execution was penance for renouncing his Catholicism:

And what if Sympson seemed to yield,  
For doubt and dread to die;  
He rose again, and won the field  
And died most constantly.

His watching, fasting, shirt of hair;  
His speech, his death, and all,  
Do record give, do witness bear,  
He wailed his former fall.<sup>110</sup>

English clerics could not always rely on the grim tale of grace through penance by means of execution; they needed something to which the mass of Catholics could relate. William Stanney depended on scripture, both the Old and New Testaments. He cited King David's speech: 'Thou shalt eate the labours of thy hands, thou shalt be blessed, and it shall be well with thee' and Saint Augustine's 'The teares in prayer of those which pray, are sweeter then the ioyes and pleasures of the Theaters. Plaine is the way of heauen, and more sweete and pleasanter, then all the flowers and delights of the world.'<sup>111</sup> It is conceivable that it did not seem like too great a leap for the English Catholic community to experiment with new methods of obtaining sacramental grace if these sorts of precedents could be justified by biblical references, thereby proving that reconceptualisation of tradition was nothing new.

Authors such as Stanney also used more local and contemporary examples, citing that of Katherine of Aragon, Henry VIII's first wife who followed a penitent lifestyle through frequent confessions, moderate nourishment, and by

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<sup>109</sup> Challoner, *Memoirs*, p. 132.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>111</sup> Stanney, *A Treatise of Penance*, pp. 50-51.



praying on her knees for several hours each day.<sup>112</sup> William Davies, a Welsh priest whose mission was in Beaumaris, practiced self-denial with his prisoners by abstaining from that which appealed most to them on their plates. They read the *Imitation of Christ*, recited the rosary and each night ‘made their examination of consciences’. Twice a week they confessed, and communicated on Sundays and Holy Days. Davies also wore a hair shirt.<sup>113</sup> Fasting was used as a way to prepare oneself for execution. William Hart fasted for six days before his execution in York in 1583, as did George Haycock.<sup>114</sup> Fasting was also used as a means of reconciling oneself back to Catholicism after a period of conformity. Thomas Moore and Reese Moore, brothers and Marian priests working in the Midlands, encouraged penance of fasting after confession and reconciliation.<sup>115</sup> By using texts and examples that would have been familiar and comforting to the Elizabethan community, these clerics and writers hoped to convince English Catholics of the value of their recommendations. These clerical authors understood the community’s reluctance to inconvenience themselves voluntarily with pain and discomfort, but with the addition of national and local examples, the community may have found the labours of penance more palatable.<sup>116</sup> Catholics often had to adapt and manage without access to a priest, but it must be stressed that this was because of the extreme nature of their circumstances, rather than by choice.

To counter this reservation, the exiled priest John Bucke wrote in his *Instructions for the use of the Beads*, published at Louvain in 1589, that penance

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<sup>112</sup> McClain, ‘Troubled Consciencs’, p. 110; Stanney, *A Treatise*, p. 240.

<sup>113</sup> Challoner, *Memoirs*, p. 194.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 75, 88.

<sup>115</sup> SP 12/156, f.46, ‘Bishop Whitgift to Walsingham’, 24 December 1582.

<sup>116</sup> McClain, ‘Troubled Consciencs’, p. 111.

was not meant to be a great discomfort to all but the most grievous of sinners.<sup>117</sup> Secular justice was modeled on this; the greater the crime, the greater the punishment.<sup>118</sup> Bucke made the point that penance was a 'positive act', rather than harsh discipline; it was meant to unburden the soul, but not necessarily while distressing the body. The example of Christ could be cited here, as Stanney suggested. Christ accepted his execution not as the punishment of death, but rather as a ritual act of penance.<sup>119</sup> Here again we have penance coinciding with death and execution, a combination that cannot have appealed to the majority of English Catholics. But rather than duplicate the death of Christ and English Catholic priests, the community was encouraged to imitate them in ritualised ways, as they had for centuries. A new appreciation of the function of the sacraments could be included into daily life.<sup>120</sup>

While there are various examples of English clerical writers (both in England and in exile) encouraging an adapted structure of the sacraments to meet with the restrictions of Catholics in England, it is hard to find evidence of personal practices. There is evidence among inventories of Catholic books confiscated by Protestant authorities that these books were well circulated, and the language in which they were written suggests they were meant to circulate among the entire social collective of English Catholics.<sup>121</sup> John Radford claimed outright to have written his *A Directorie* so that it could be understood by 'the

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<sup>117</sup> John Bucke, *Instructions for the use of the beades* (1589; reprint, Yorkshire: The Scholar Press, 1971), p. 69.

<sup>118</sup> McClain, 'Troubled Consciences', p. 112.

<sup>119</sup> Stanney, *A Treatise of Penance*, pp. 49-53.

<sup>120</sup> McClain, 'Troubled Consciences', p. 113.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

plain man', and urged the 'unlearned' to have it read to them.<sup>122</sup> Lay Catholics could perform penance and other sacramental rituals on their own or in groups, within the boundaries of their personal freedom or within prisons.<sup>123</sup> Baker encouraged this:

Next, all increase of sanctifying grace, by whatever instrument it may be produced – by austerities, temperance, mortifications, and so forth – is effected according to the good internal dispositions, impulses and inspirations of the soul accompanying the use of them. The same may be affirmed in a certain degree even of the sacraments themselves in the case of adults. For though the Sacraments by their own intrinsic virtue ... confer a peculiar grace and aid, 'on the part of God' at all times, and on all persons who can receive them worthily (Sess. Vii., can. 6&7), yet, at the same time, the quantity and measure of grace is said by the same Council to be 'according to the peculiar disposition and co-operation of each person respectively.' So that those who come with more (or less) intense, sustained, and multiplied internal acts of faith, hope, charity, or devotion, receive a more (or less) intense, sustained, and multiplied internal acts of sacramental grace. Now, what are all these dispositions and preparations but the exercise of internal prayer? Hence it appears how wonderful is the influence of internal prayer, whether by way or merit or impretation, or by direct efficacy in the production and increase of divine virtues of the soul.<sup>124</sup>

Some works that circulated among the Catholic laity did not suggest any separation from traditional teachings, and especially clung to the doctrines of the Council of Trent. The best literary example of this is Lawrence Vaux's *Catechism*, widely circulated around England, and included in Midland inventories of Catholic books. It was found in Thomas Tresham's London house at Hoxton, along with a book called 'The Jesuit's Testament in English', Parsons' book of Christian exercises, and two primers (*Officine Beate Marie Virginis*) and a manual of prayers. Thomas Wilford, who was known to Tresham and Thomas

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<sup>122</sup> John Radford, *A Directorie*, p. A3.

<sup>123</sup> Patrick McGrath, 'Apostate and Naughty Priests in England under Elizabeth I', in Dominic Aidan Bellenger (ed.) *Opening the Scrolls: Essays in Honour of Godfrey Anstruther* (Bath: Downside Abbey, 1987), p. 69.

<sup>124</sup> Blundell, *Contemplative Prayer*, p. 201.

Throckmorton, witnessed his Hoxton household searched, where a 'verie ould' mass book, a written Catechism, a primer, again, very old, a book on the persecution of Catholics in England and one containing 'unlawfull information' of English Protestants, and a book on the catechisms on the Council of Trent were found.<sup>125</sup> Gilbert Pickering was paid £70 in 1611 for his efforts in searching Harrowden Hall and sending Anne Vaux and two priests along with their 'divers books and other stuff' to London.<sup>126</sup> Unfortunately the titles of these books are not recorded. This is an odd and interesting mix of the old and the new; clearly the medieval texts they owned were dear enough to keep, even if they were in rough shape. On the other hand, some effort has been made to acquire new texts, by Vaux, the Jesuits and the teachings of Counter Reformation doctrine. Like Elizabeth Somerville in Warwickshire, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there was a desire among the Midland Catholic community for pre-Reformation literature, as well as new missionary works; there was comfort in both.

Vaux, an exiled canon regular priest from Lancashire, first published his *Catechism* in 1567, and it was reprinted three times during Elizabeth's reign (followed by another in 1605). Vaux emphasised the Council of Trent's insistence on sacramental confession and penance in the presence of a priest. However, Vaux and the other exiled writers had little experience with the practical restrictions that English Catholics faced after penalties intensified in the 1570s. They assumed a priest would be present, and therefore expected the traditional sacraments to be available. It was the authors with missionary experience within

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<sup>125</sup> SP 12/172, f.169, 'Report of the search made at Hoggesden', 27 August 1584.

<sup>126</sup> Northampton CRO, E. 351/543 mem. 264, 'Household Accounts', 15 November 1611.

England who understood that adaptations had to be made, but they did not wish to alienate themselves from Tridentine teachings, as they were dependent upon Counter-Reformation support. The Tridentine church upheld the medieval interpretations of the sacrament of penance; the parish priest granted forgiveness, not directly from God. English clerics encouraged something innovative; they were following neither the late-medieval nor Tridentine teachings of the sacraments. The new Church of England denied any sacramental element to confession and penance, and even though the act was still practiced, its ritual had changed with reform. Some English Catholics seem to have taken a rather reformed view: that God could grant forgiveness of sins, without the intercession of a priest. Catholics never underrated the role of a priest in the conferring of sacraments, however; rather, they were forced to seek grace for themselves at times.

For Catholics who chose church papism as their mode of conveyance through English restrictions, non-communicating at the reformed service proved easy and effective.<sup>127</sup> Refusal to take communion in the new church did not signify a tilt towards popish beliefs, or a rejection of 'post-Eucharistic theory'.<sup>128</sup> There was a widespread belief within the reformed church that to take the Eucharist while outside of a state of grace would provoke punishment from God, and thus many parishioners often refrained from communicating apart from the

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<sup>127</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England*, Woodbridge (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1993), p. 86.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

annual requirement at Easter.<sup>129</sup> Catholics could follow suit and avoid unwanted notice from the law.

Walsham found in her study of church papists in Elizabethan England that this splinter-group of Catholics also had to accommodate and adapt, something they seem to have done in collaboration with one another, rather than in small groups or separately. This was surely in part to maintain the religious beliefs to which they wished to adhere, but also because the Church of England was now the administrative centre of the parish, where income, prestige, tithes and patronage were managed.<sup>130</sup> Puritans in Staffordshire in 1604 complained that 'popish' parishioners still held influence as lay rectors within the parish.<sup>131</sup> Even Catholics had well-founded reasons for choosing to live within the parishes' 'social services'. These often revolved around the Catholic sacraments, which might have an ambiguous status in a largely conservative parish, officially reformed and yet in practice traditional. Unbaptised babies were blighted with illegitimacy, and land and property rights could not be confirmed in a marriage celebrated outside the parish church. Double ceremonies, one legally legitimate within the Protestant church, and one spiritually sound and contracted by a missionary priest were not uncommon.<sup>132</sup> The wish to be buried in consecrated ground also obliged many to accept Protestant burial rites. As Alexandra Walsham has stated, 'While the growing insularity of the Catholic community is unquestionable, living in frosty isolation from people who were in principle the

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<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*; Donald A. Spaeth, 'Common Prayer? Popular Observance of the Anglican Liturgy in Restoration Wiltshire', in S.J. Wright (ed.) *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion 1350-1750* (London: Hutchinson, 1988), pp. 131-139.

<sup>130</sup> Walsham, *Church Papists*, p. 85

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

agents of heresy and the devil, but in practice friends, acquaintances and relatives, was largely an impracticable polemical ideal.’<sup>133</sup>

In late-medieval England, parishioners participated in a Mass at nearly all church services. Mass was a way in which Catholics could work towards salvation, and through it they also identified with Christ by seeing, and sometimes touching and tasting His body if they took the Eucharist.<sup>134</sup> The purpose of the Mass was standard throughout late-medieval England, but as Eamon Duffy’s research has found, ‘it is impossible to talk of a single type of experience of the Mass.’<sup>135</sup> This may be another reason why Elizabethan Catholics were tolerant and accepting of alternative practices, rather than those prescribed. Wooding argues that devotion to the sacrament of the Eucharist grew after the reforms of Henry VIII, as the English Catholic understanding of Mass changed on account of the Catholic intellectual effect of humanism, and without the pope they had to rally around an alternate focal point.<sup>136</sup>

Exiled writers penned literature stressing the need for consistent attendance at Mass; one of the strongest supporters of this was Laurence Vaux. Campion, while imprisoned, said that the treason and conspiracy of which the government accused him was nothing but the ‘saying of Mass, hearing confessions, preaching and such-like duties and functions of priesthood.’<sup>137</sup> Contrary to the high regard usually accorded the Mass, a Derbyshire Jesuit, John Radford, claimed in his *Directorie* that God was not obligated to give grace solely through the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist. Traditional methods were

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<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> McClain, *Lest we be Damned*, p. 109.

<sup>135</sup> Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 116.

<sup>136</sup> Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism*, p. 83.

<sup>137</sup> Challoner, *Memoirs*, p. 29.

ideal, but at a pinch, God would give grace without the intermediary of a priest or without the practice of the sacraments. Radford wrote:

but these Sacraments doe contein in them, and confer grace to the worthy receiuer: Though Christ is the author of his Sacraments, neither is God so bound to his sacraments, but he can bestow his grace without them.<sup>138</sup>

Radford encouraged the laity to seek pastoral care from a priest when one was available, but also stressed that God had created various paths to salvation.<sup>139</sup> He said in regard to the Eucharist that the laity could experience a spiritual reception rather than a corporal ingestion of the sacrament:

so the real eating of Christs flesh, according to the worthy eating therof which Christ co[m]manded, doth make vs all free fro[m] the paine of euerlasting death, & the children of grace & glory. But as euery man did not eate the prohibited apple in his own person & by his own act, but by the act of our father & mother, & as being in them, & of them: so it is not needfull that euery man in his owne person eate the flesh of Christ which is giuen vs in the Sacrament to be eate[n]. But it is absolutely needful that some or other eat it as really to saluation.<sup>140</sup>

This must have been built upon the huge emphasis on ‘seeing’ the sacrament in the late-medieval church – parishioners had already created a kind of remote reception which helped prepare the way for this Elizabethan practice. If one could not attend Mass, the Catholic believer was compelled to find Christ by other means. Meditative acts such as reflecting on the crucified Christ, and drawing comparisons between his suffering and that of the English Catholics, to identify with Him, such as the works of Arthur Crowther and Thomas Vincent, are discussed below.<sup>141</sup> These techniques, to receive the eucharist spiritually through meditation on the crucifixion of Christ, or a comparison of Christ’s

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<sup>138</sup> Radford, *A Directorie*, p. 71.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71, 104-105.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

<sup>141</sup> McClain, *Lest we be Damned*, p. 122.



suffering with one's own, were adapted ways to participate in the Mass.<sup>142</sup> The Elizabethan Catholic clergy and community did not necessarily break with church tradition, but they reconstrued doctrine and teachings to enable them to achieve the purposes of the sacrament of the Eucharist. Even with lacking priests and access to Mass, Catholics could achieve grace.<sup>143</sup>

In the seventeenth century, Crowther and Vincent wrote in their work *Jesus, Maria, Joseph* of the prior attempts of missionary priests to promote the benefit of sacraments without a priest to confer them. Crowther and Vincent, however, took the teaching of the Elizabethan missionary priests to the limit; by endorsing that the laity could perform the sacraments themselves, through prayer, and in this manner attain a species of transubstantiation of the believer.<sup>144</sup> Crowther and Vincent wrote:

By your incarnation, you establish a new manner of gracious favor in the world, which makes me in the Order of Grace, not only existent by you but existent in you. So that by this manner of Grace...I am not only yours, not only by you, but I am in you; I live in you, I make a part of you; I am bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh, let me also be spirit of your spirit, let me life by your life' let me participate of the Interior, of Grace, of the Estate, of the Spirit of your Mysteries.<sup>145</sup>

Crowther and Vincent named these prayers 'Elevations', to evoke the image of consecrated bread raised over the head of Christ. The eighth elevation, which has the supplicant asking God to make himself consecrated, is especially interesting:

Your Divinity (as it were) Incarcerated, is my substance, and my subsistence: your humanity (as it were) divinized, is my health and my

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<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>144</sup> Arthur Crowther and Thomas Vincent, *Jesus, Maria, Joseph, or, The Devout Pilgrim, of the Ever Blessed Virgin Mary, in His Holy Exercises, Affections, and Elevations* (Amsterdam: 1657), pp. 494, 533-534.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 504-506.

life: your Body is my diet and your Blood is my Bath, your Death is my life, your weakness is my strength, your Cross is my quiet, your suffering is my rejoicing. Thus I am yours and you are mine. Let me forget myself, for you forget Your self for me: Let me leave and lose myself, for you annihilate Your self for me: Let me be yours, for You are mine; let me be all yours, for You are all mine; Let me be all yours forever, for you are all mine forever.<sup>146</sup>

Crowther and Vincent suggest that these elevations are themselves a celebration of Mass or receiving the Eucharist. Their twelfth and thirteen elevations suggest to the actual transformation of the supplicant into Christ by becoming detached from himself and made into the body of Christ. The supplicant no longer asks God to act as a priest, for he has become a priest himself:

I annihilate myself in my own self, to be in you; and I will carry in my soul a death to all things, that I may live in you: And I will that my Being be reduced to be nothing else than a pure Capacity of you filled up with you ... I will transform myself into you.<sup>147</sup>

Crowther and Vincent suggest that the cause and reason for this transformation was love, 'Love puts you on the cross, and placeth us in Glory; and, finally, this Love transforms us into you'.<sup>148</sup> Love was also the substance of change for Baker, who wrote, 'Divine love is at least the principle, if not the only virtue that brings souls to beatitude.'<sup>149</sup>

#### 5.4 Conclusion

English Catholics used prudent judgment when choosing literature to satisfy their spiritual needs, re-using late-medieval texts combined with English clerical

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<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 511-512.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 519-520.

<sup>149</sup> Blundell, *Contemplative Prayer*, p. 339.

writings. Exiled Catholic writers and literature, scholars know, made an impact, but they were often out of touch with the English Catholic experience and requirements. It may be that, in such cases, English Catholics used for themselves a kind of censoring method; accepting what was taught, but understanding that it could not be practiced within their own circumstances. It has proven difficult to appreciate the direct impact of this literature and change in sacramental practices on the Midlands counties, though for England as a whole the impression is clearer. Faced with restrictive religious laws, the community adapted traditional worship from previous generations, but also took some of these practices to new levels, demonstrating a willingness to use innovative means to remain Catholic. This innovation shows the willingness of the clergy and community to reinterpret the sacraments in order to keep their faith alive. They practised day-to-day rituals that the Roman Church had only allowed in extreme circumstances.<sup>150</sup> English Catholics created a new identity and community through redefinition of Catholic traditions, with the help of the clergy, all the while striving to remain within orthodox boundaries.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> McClain, *Lest we be Damned*, p. 139.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269.

## **6. English Catholics and the Invention of Sacred Space in the Elizabethan Midlands**

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The religious reformation of sixteenth century England resulted in dramatic change not only in religious practice but also for the 'space' in which it had been traditionally experienced. Prior to the Reformation, Catholic religious life centred on the parish church, with its altars, vestments, screens, banners, statues, carvings and glass; it also spilled over into sermons and processions in the churchyard, and it could reach outside consecrated ground to pilgrimage sites, and holy features of the landscape, including the boundaries of the parish marked by the Rogationtide processions. Sacred space and material culture were aspects of religious daily life that the entire parochial community would have been familiar with and involved in; it was a theatre of worship, expressed through ritual. It was an essential element of pre-Reformation Christianity, but one that the religious policies of Henry VIII, Edward VI and Elizabeth I attacked. English Catholics responded to this in three ways. They attempted to preserve fragments of sacred pre-Reformation Christianity, sometimes even continuing to worship within the body of the parish church, or more commonly retaining the sacrality of features outside the church, such as wells and holy sites. Secondly, they adapted old practices to new purposes, as with the rosary and medieval books of devotion. Thirdly, they found new places for worship, thereby imparting to them a sacred quality; this can be seen in prisons, domestic spaces,

and at sites of execution. This Catholic innovation in the construction of sacred space is the primary focus of this chapter.

There is space to frame part of this research theoretically, and, seeing that Midland Catholics reconceptualised some sacred space into figurative, rather than literal space, it is best to engage with this concept. Midland Catholics found the holy in material objects, events, days, people and churches, but this represents something largely conjectural – that God and Holiness was everywhere. The Catholic imagination was formed before the Protestant Reformation, and this imagination was a created reality that in practise was religious worship. Catholic imagination can be interpreted as an extension of the Sacraments, and indeed imagination was required for the Sacraments. Medieval Catholic devotions, such as meditations on and prayers for souls in purgatory, required a theoretical mind-set, and so some of the new or altered ways in which they practised clandestine Catholicism should not be surprising, or seem unique or experimental.

With the overthrow of authorised Catholic worship during the sixteenth century in England, traditional sacred space along with Catholic doctrine was attacked; these ‘traditional’ spaces were at times appropriate for Protestant worship, for example the parish church, but they still continued to be ‘sacred space’ for some Catholics. Thereafter, Catholic sacred space often meant separate space from that of their Protestant neighbours, unless it was the parish church. Although late-medieval parishioners had used space apart from the churchyard to remove themselves theoretically from the wickedness of the world, such as shrines, wells and through the use of religious objects, resulting in the transformation of the natural world into sacred space, this separation had never

excluded members of the parish community.<sup>1</sup> Sacred space provided opportunities for the laity to leave, at least spiritually, the sins of the world and become closer to God, simply through physical contact with such a site. This occurred not only through physical contact with such a site, but certain ritual acts that *created* holiness. Devotional acts carried out at these sites were considered more powerful because of the devotees' closeness to the divine.<sup>2</sup> Lisa McClain has termed this 'the two-way interchange between the material and spiritual worlds that characterised the Catholic worldview.'<sup>3</sup> The loss of the parish church for the Catholic community was therefore not just the loss of the physical space for worship, but the area where ritualised acts were traditionally performed and which had become hallowed through centuries of worship. However, the use of ritual acts to *create* holiness did offer opportunities for the post-Reformation Catholic community. This also allows us to challenge the assumptions we may have on the nature of Catholic religion in the Elizabethan Midlands; whether it was private, or public; a decision or choice, or an act of habit or inertia.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lisa McClain, 'Without Church, Cathedral or Shrine: The Search for Religious Space Among Catholics in England, 1559-1625', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 33 (2002), p. 382; Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), chapter 1.

<sup>2</sup> McClain, 'Without Church', p. 383.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Robert Orsi, 'Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion', in David Hall (ed.) *Lived Religion in America: Towards a History of Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University press, 1997), p. 6.

### 6.1 Parish Church

This essence of sacred space that had been supported and encouraged by the medieval clergy was prohibited by the central government during sixteenth-century English reform movements.<sup>5</sup> By the 1550s, religious material objects and sites outside of the churchyard that had, prior to the Reformation, been used as essential mediums to daily devotion, had been deemed illicit and superstitious by the central government and such practices attracted strict punishment.<sup>6</sup> In this light, the third of the injunctions of 1559 stated:

That the works devised by man's fantasies, besides Scripture (as wandering of pilgrimages, setting up of candles, praying upon beads, or such like superstition), have not only no promise of reward in Scripture for doing of them, but contrariwise great threatenings and maledictions of God, for that they being things tending to idolatry and superstition, which of all other offences God Almighty doth most detest and abhor, for that the same most diminish His honour and glory.<sup>7</sup>

Even so, many Elizabethan Catholics continued to rely on objects such as rosaries and images for spiritual fulfilment in what could be termed 'material sub-culture'.<sup>8</sup> These objects could have both a physical and theological relationship with sacred space, while some were public and some were private. Pilgrimages, for example, were focused on particular *places*, while candles had to be put in a physical *space*.

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<sup>5</sup> See Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), chs. 11-13.

<sup>6</sup> Richard L. Williams, 'Contesting the Everyday: The Cultural Biography of a Subversive Playing Card', in Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson's *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), p. 241.

<sup>7</sup> Henry Gee and W.H. Hardy (eds.), 'The Injunctions of 1559', in *Documents Illustrative of English Church History* (New York: MacMaillan Press, 1896), pp. 419-420.

<sup>8</sup> Williams, 'Contesting the Everyday', p. 241.

Much of the Catholic community simply refused, either obstinately or more mildly, to relinquish their connection with traditional sacred space. The rationale for choosing recusancy was complex, and could range between religious and cultural motivations. Some churches kept familiar rituals, and parishioners continued to visit shrines and holy-wells, which hindered the proselytisation of the reformed religion.<sup>9</sup> In 1565 Thomas Bentham, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, called for a visitation of his diocese and had to remind the parish vicars and churchwardens to ‘call vppon the people dayly that they caste away those beads [beads] w[ith] all those sup[er]stitions that they doe vse praying vppon them.’<sup>10</sup> Saying the rosary in any place had the power to make the space in which the activity took place a sacred space, if only temporarily. However, it was not simply the rejection of rosary beads, used for personal prayer, which needed reinforcement among the people of Coventry and Lichfield. Bentham also raged against altars, mass books and books of Latin service, prayers for the dead, requiem masses and burial lights. He wrote to the parson, vicar and churchwardens of each parish, ordering ‘that yo[re] aulters be Cleane taken away and that there be noe monuments of them lefte’.<sup>11</sup> On mass books he wrote:

That you cast away yo[re] masse books yo[re] polteses [paslters] and all other books of Latine s[er]vice and that you vse none other s[er]vice nether priuatelie nor ap[er]tly but that w[hich] is sett forth in the booke of common prayer.<sup>12</sup>

Rood lofts, the spaces in every parish church where candles, images and statues sanctified an elevated precinct *within* the parish church (therefore creating

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<sup>9</sup> McClain, ‘Without Church’, p. 380.

<sup>10</sup> SP 12/36/86, f.87r. ‘Thomas Bentham to Mr. Sale, 28 April 1565’.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*



sacred space within a sacred space), were once again commanded to be dismantled, evidence that the original command had been ignored in some parishes, and idols and images that had been 'Layed Vpp in secret places of yo[re] church were Latyne s[er]vice was vsed' were not taken down.<sup>13</sup> This is a thought provoking indication that early Elizabethan Catholics were continuing to use certain areas of the parish church for Catholic worship.

After the Elizabethan Settlement, sacred space could include traditional space, but Catholics could not depend on free access to church and churchyard, which were for the most part no longer available to them. Barred from worshipping as they desired within authorised religious practice, some of the Catholic community continued in medieval worship patterns away from the churchyard at shrines and with objects. Alexandra Walsham asserted: 'The beliefs and rituals that continued to cluster around sacred sites in the landscape were hallmarks of a conservative, backward-looking Catholicism that clung tenaciously to the familiar ways of its forefathers.'<sup>14</sup> While looking to the past, early modern Catholics were forced to refashion both the idea and practice of sacred space, in order to move ahead within the Elizabethan reformation.

Any space could potentially be utilised by post-Reformation Catholics as sacred space, and much of this was channeled into four flexible categories; for ritual and worship; for preserving Catholic identity; for private prayer; and for developing a sense of post-Reformation Catholic community.<sup>15</sup> In order for someone to use or create a sacred space, he or she need only practise some form

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., f.88r-89r.

<sup>14</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 153-154.

<sup>15</sup> McClain, 'Without Church', p. 399.

of ritualised or religious activity that was separate from temporal space either physically, ritually or imaginatively.<sup>16</sup> Gazing upon images, and praying before them, was an act of visual piety that Midland Catholics could practice.<sup>17</sup>

The post-Reformation use of sacred space raises the question of the extent to which the innovation of new space was a response to Protestantism, as a method of exclusion, or as a method to keep Catholicism alive within the whole parish. It seems that there were elements of both intentional separation from Protestant religious worship, all the while cooperating with parochial life. An example of intentional separation of Catholics from the conforming sphere would be the retreat into seigneurial households.<sup>18</sup> Parts of these estates, for example, chapels and prayer rooms – even priest’s holes – would constitute sacred space. The Tower Room of Coughton Court in Warwickshire served as a chapel, and the estate’s priest’s hole with a double hide was accessed from this room. With its panoramic views of the estate, it enabled early detection of pursuivants who were coming to search for priests, as well as a safe place for them to hide if they were indeed in the house. Mass may have been said in an annex room of Baddesley Clinton, Warwickshire, and Harvington Hall had a secret chapel, as well as seven hides for priests. Vast estates, such as Harrowden Hall in Northamptonshire, had private family chapels, though this was rare. The Vaux family were permitted to use their chapel, provided that they kept to the

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 383, 399.

<sup>17</sup> David Morgan, *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Images* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> These would normally be the household of a Catholic gentry family, who offered semi-feudal protection to the Catholic families who lived in the parish or worked for the estate. As seen in chapter 1 of this dissertation, Midland Catholics did not necessarily rely on the support of local Catholic gentry, with the exception of Worcestershire.

authorised service. Lord Vaux was admonished in 1581 for disobeying this rule, and famously responded that Harrowden Hall was 'a parish by itself'.<sup>19</sup> Instances of Catholics encountering Protestantism within the parish could be exemplified by a Catholic carrying a rosary into a Protestant church, or by reciting a Latin prayer silently during a reformed service, or by conforming outwardly by attending a Protestant service, like church papists.<sup>20</sup> In 1577, the chapter clerk of Hereford Cathedral, James Eton, sat so far away from the preacher during service that he could not hear the sermon.<sup>21</sup> Thus, while fulfilling his civil duty by attending reformed service, he spiritually removed himself from it in this way.

There were also conversations or polemical exchanges between the two religious camps, in which books and other printed materials became a form of religious encounter and were sometimes capable of creating an imagined sacred space. Broadsheets and engravings of miracles were frequently smuggled into England from the continent. Edward Throgmorton of Worcestershire took advantage of their depictions as persuasive proof that Protestantism was heresy, and tried to use them to persuade his friends of the 'fables and lies' of the heretics.<sup>22</sup> There were also books which juxtaposed passages by Catholic and Protestant authors; such as the conference between John Aylmer, the Bishop of London, and a Catholic priest named Merbury from Northampton, written in 1578 and kept with Thomas Tresham's correspondence and writings in the British Library, which gives insight into the Catholic community from one of its

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<sup>19</sup> Jessie Childs, *God's Traitors: Terror and Faith in Elizabethan England* (London: The Bodley Head, 2014), pp. 64-65.

<sup>20</sup> McClain, 'Without Church', p. 384.

<sup>21</sup> Patrick Ryan (ed.), 'Diocesan Returns of Recusants for England and Wales, 1577', in *CRS Miscellanea XII*, CRS 22 (1921), p. 78.

<sup>22</sup> Alexandra Walsham, 'Miracles and the Counter-Reformation Mission', *The Historical Journal* 46 (2003), p. 788.

own members.<sup>23</sup> Thomas Tresham owned at least one copy of *The Manual of Prayers*, thought by Eamon Duffy to be an untapped resource of post-Reformation English Catholicism, and also Lawrence Vaux's *Catechism*, which encouraged Catholics to continue practicing the Commandments and sacraments.<sup>24</sup>

## 6.2 Traditional Sites

The Catholic church up to the 1530s offered a mode of life as well as a belief system to late medieval parishioners. In Keith Thomas's view, it provided 'a limitless source of supernatural aid, applicable to most of the problems likely to arise in daily life.'<sup>25</sup> The re-formation of the ritual year and the significant negative impact that had on the English populace is one possible explanation for the fact that so many parishioners were hostile to these changes.<sup>26</sup> For example, the abolition of many minor holy days by Henry VIII in 1532 was unpopular, as was the negation of religious cults, such as that of St Thomas Becket.<sup>27</sup>

Next to come was the physical reformation of the parish churches. Royal injunctions of 1538 ordered each parish church to purchase a Bible. In addition to this, all lights within the church must thereafter be for illumination only, with the exception of candles before the Easter sepulchre, and not for religious

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<sup>23</sup> Add MS 29829, f. 23r, 'Merbury, preacher at Northampton: Conference with the Bishop of London', 5 December, 1578.

<sup>24</sup> SP 12/172, f.169, 'Report of the search made at Hoggesden [Hoxten] by order of her Majesty and the council', 21 August 1584; Eamon Duffy, 'Prayer and the Counter-Reformation: Catholics and their prayer-books in early modern England' paper delivered at *What is Early Modern English Catholicism?* Conference at Durham University, 30 June 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, p. 89.

<sup>26</sup> See Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 5-49.

<sup>27</sup> Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 394-398.

purposes; images meant for offerings were to be taken down; images of saints were to be treated as memorials only, and not as images to encourage prayer; and finally, relics would no longer be venerated.<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth's injunctions of 1559 renewed these provisions, for both church and home. The twenty-third injunction stated:

Also, that they shall take away, utterly extinct, and destroy all shrines, coverings of shrines, all tables, candlesticks, trindals, and rolls of wax, pictures, paintings, and all other monuments of feigned miracles, pilgrimages, idolatry, and superstition, so that there remain no memory of the same in walls, glass windows, or elsewhere within their churches and houses.<sup>29</sup>

This reminded parishioners that 'Romish' objects no longer had a place within reformed society. Here we can also recall Bentham's visitation of the diocese of Coventry and Litchfield in 1565, reminding his parishioners of parochial reform.

When reflecting on the 'natural' or 'physical' metamorphoses that occurred during the course of the Reformation in England, the images likely to arise in one's mind are those of ruined abbeys and monasteries; these are among the few visual examples of pre-Reformation Catholicism that one can still easily see in Britain today. Physically less monumental but perhaps equally destructive to the Catholic community were the thousands of shrines, holy-wells and pilgrimage sites that dotted the English countryside and were then in danger of being purged from their space and therefore from people's minds. Recent research has found that the natural world had, for hundreds of years in England, captivated the laity by giving them a sense of devotional actualisation that could not be accomplished from the Mass alone.<sup>30</sup> The connection between religion

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<sup>28</sup> Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, p. 75.

<sup>29</sup> Gee and Hardy, 'The Injunctions of 1559', p. 428.

<sup>30</sup> Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, pp. 26-48.

and the landscape as sacred space was one that was fundamental to the English laity before the Reformation. An unyielding distinction between sacred space within consecrated grounds and the sacred space of the natural surroundings is therefore 'both artificial and anachronistic'.<sup>31</sup>

During reform movements traditional acts of devotion at shrines and pilgrim sites were condemned and censured because of the supposed magical or superstitious connections and roots of sites such as holy wells, standing stones, or natural sacred space and also ritual objects such as images and holy water, rosary beads and the ringing of church bells.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, while many Protestants found fault with the allegedly pagan aspects of religious worship outside of consecrated ground, some of the reformed community continued to find spiritual fulfillment in natural spaces such as churchyards, woods, farms or fields.<sup>33</sup> This initiative on behalf of the Protestants in England was to escape popery and superstition that they felt remained within the reformed church; however, the fact that it lasted well into Elizabeth's reign also suggests something more complex. Several contemporary writers witnessed Protestants reenacting medieval rituals associated with sacred landscape.<sup>34</sup> The Jesuit William Weston, from his prison cell in Wisbech Castle, recorded such an occurrence in his autobiography. He stated that a group of Puritans, who had garnered sympathy from the gaolers of the castle, would gather 'on a large level stretch of ground

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Penguin Books, 1971), pp. 58-59.

<sup>33</sup> Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, p. 236.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

within the precincts of the prison.’<sup>35</sup> There they would hold sermons, and give communion and practice fasting. Though this was an example of non-Catholics practicing in a natural sacred space, it did not impress Weston, who wrote:

It was a wretched and truly pitiful sight, but in some ways it was comic and laughable for the onlookers. When the gathering broke up after a long fast and an entire day spent in performances of this kind, they went off to a vast and elaborately set-out feast. And the affair concluded.<sup>36</sup>

While Weston’s remarks are unsympathetic to the Puritan community, the important point, that both Catholics and Puritans needed to find new space for worship and prayer, is difficult to ignore.

The Jesuits encouraged the distinction between Catholic and Protestant space, even if this space was only imagined by the Catholics.<sup>37</sup> For example, an ordinary room within a home could be reconceptualised into a chapel, or a particular table into a shrine to a favorite saint, at least mentally. In this manner, ordinary space became sacred space, with the added benefit that it was non-indictable by pursuivants and authorities. Jesuit Robert Southwell even encouraged this imaginary sacred space in the natural world.<sup>38</sup> Southwell wrote:

I must in euery roome of the house where I dwell, imagin in some decent place therof, a throne or chaire of estate, & dedcate the same and the whole roome to some Saint, that whensoever I enter into it, I enter as it were into a chappell or church that is deuoted to such a Saint, and thereoe in minde doe that reuerence that is due to them. And thus hauing in euery roome settled seuerall Saintes, and in minde consecrated the same vnto them, and decked it with such furniture as is fitte for such an inhabitant, the same house will bee to me in a maner a Paradise.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> William Weston, *The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, ed. Philip Caraman (1955), p. 165.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> McClain, ‘Without Church’, p. 384.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 385.

<sup>39</sup> Robert Southwell, *A short rule of good life To direct the devout Christian in a regular and orderly course*, (St Omer: John Heigham, 1622), pp. 162-163.

Unfortunately the very nature of such a theoretical and internalised view of sacred space makes it exceptionally difficult to determine whether or not Midland Catholics practised Southwell's solution to a post-Reformation problem. If any Midland Catholics did follow his advice, they have left no evidence of such activities. It is known that Catholic Mass was celebrated in several Midlands gentry estates, such as the Tower Room in Coughton Court and at Baddesley Clinton in Warwickshire, Harvington Hall and Hindlip Hall in Worcestershire and Harrowden Hall and Rushton Hall in Northamptonshire, which seminary priests and Jesuits used as safe houses and headquarters. The Jesuits Robert Parsons and Edmund Campion stayed at Park Hall, home of Edward Arden, in 1580 and 1581.<sup>40</sup> The seminary priest John Sugar and his lay servant Robert Grissold were arrested in Rowington, Warwickshire, in 1604, purportedly after Sugar had celebrated Mass at Ralph Sheldon's house.<sup>41</sup>

### 6.3 Purgatory

Purgatory is an example of mental and imagined space. More practically it was a central part of popular devotion in terms of where Catholics did their praying for the dead; it clearly continued to be important after the Reformation in England, as the responsibility of the Catholic community to their dead remained strong.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Michael Hodgetts, *Secret Hiding Places* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1989), p. 37.

<sup>41</sup> Richard Challoner, *Missionary Priests*, II, nos 135, 136.

<sup>42</sup> Lucy Wooding, 'Remembrance in the Eucharist', in Andrew Gordon and Thomas Rist (eds.) *The Arts of Remembrance in Early Modern England: Memorial Cultures of the Post-Reformation* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p. 20.



The most beneficial method of helping a soul through its time in purgatory and into heaven was through the Mass.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, when the Mass was remodeled into the Protestant Eucharist, its impact on the social dependence of intercessory prayers was necessarily changed. Much in medieval Catholicism, both authorised theology and liturgy and popular belief, was founded on the doctrine of purgatory, and the living devoted much effort both to securing prayers for their own souls and doling out prayers for the dead.<sup>44</sup> The majority of medieval English wills request prayers for the soul of the testator. Revisionist historians have found that even so, this is no indication that English men and women were motivated by a fear of purgatory; intercession on behalf of the dead was also meant to aid the living; the clergy benefited from the foundation of chantry chapels, and the poor from funeral doles of bread, while the deceased often bequeathed money and objects for the upkeep and adornment of the parish church.<sup>45</sup>

The doctrine of purgatory was central to English worshippers, but it was to become one of the most offensive details of Catholic superstition to reformers and the Protestant community, and therefore was one of the first aspects of Catholicism to be declared invalid.<sup>46</sup> It became a target of both Protestant and Catholic reformers on account of its association with monasticism and also because of its suspicious connection with the indulgence campaign and related

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<sup>43</sup> Peter Marshall, *Reformation England, 1480-1642* (London: Hodder Education, 2003), p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> Marshall, *Reformation England*, p. 7; Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars who Study them* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 82.

<sup>45</sup> Marshall, *Reformation England*, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> Lucy Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 218.

abuses towards relics and pilgrimages.<sup>47</sup> Reformers within the Catholic tradition 'preferred to direct devotional impulses towards Christocentric notions of salvation and the Mass,' therefore Elizabethan Catholics had to refashion the integrity of the belief and observance of purgatory.<sup>48</sup> When Protestant reformers attacked purgatory, humanists and Catholic reformers defended the doctrine, stressing charity and the mystical body of Christ in its defense.<sup>49</sup> Humanists such as Thomas More and John Fisher maintained that the bonds between family and friends naturally encouraged prayers for the dead.<sup>50</sup>

The Henrician and Edwardian changes were successful in devaluing the impact of both purgatory and the cult of the saints.<sup>51</sup> Shrines and pilgrimages were not reintroduced to their medieval importance, fewer lights burned within the parish church, fraternities and guilds could not regain their significance, and the observance of purgatory did not feature in wills to the extent that it had prior to reform.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, the Marian church inspired the next generation of recusants in Elizabeth's reign, and, in Eamon Duffy's perspective, invented the counter-reformation.<sup>53</sup>

With the accession of Mary Tudor in 1553 and the subsequent nationwide reconversion to Catholicism, steps were taken at both the state and popular levels to recapture some aspects of medieval Catholicism. Altars and images

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Marshall, *Reformation England*, p. 99; Hutton, 'The Local Impact of the Tudor Reformations', in Christopher Haigh's *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 131.

<sup>52</sup> Marshall, *Reformation England*, p. 99.

<sup>53</sup> Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 207.

were quickly replaced in parish churches, and the appropriate Catholic literature and mass vestments obtained throughout the country.<sup>54</sup>

Mary Tudor's Catholic England cannot be compared to medieval Catholicism; she could not completely mend the break from Rome by her father, and her sister had little difficulty in overthrowing Marian religious policy.<sup>55</sup> There is evidence, however, that the spirit of the counter-reformation was beginning to be perceived within Marian Catholicism.<sup>56</sup> Peter Marshall has found that by 1555 provision for prayers for the dead was once more regaining enthusiasm.<sup>57</sup> Intercession for the souls in purgatory had always been believed to be a long exercise 'dependent upon a whole variety of interlocking social structures that had been demolished during the two previous reigns.'<sup>58</sup> Time was needed to reestablish these deep-set social beliefs and structures, but unfortunately for the zealous Catholics of England, Mary Tudor's reign did not last long enough to effectively inaugurate these back into daily life. While English Catholicism certainly survived Mary's death, it had transformed into something unique.<sup>59</sup> This suggests that sacred space was a communal tradition, rather than one that was necessarily encouraged by parochial authorities. During the Elizabethan period, the importance of charity and intercessory prayers continued to be important within the Catholic community.<sup>60</sup> This occurred largely through the efforts of missionary priests. William Allen, in his work

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<sup>54</sup> Christopher Haigh, *Reformations, English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society Under the Tudors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 211-212; Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 555, 556.

<sup>55</sup> Marshall, *Reformation England*, p9. 99-100.

<sup>56</sup> Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, pp. 188-207.

<sup>57</sup> Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, pp. 117-118.

<sup>58</sup> Marshall, *Reformation England*, p. 100.

<sup>59</sup> Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, p. 189.

<sup>60</sup> Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism*, p. 220.

*Defence and Declaration Touching Purgatory* asserted the need for not only the spiritual, but also the practical significance of purgatory within communal life, therefore drawing on the medieval fundamentals of the ideology.<sup>61</sup> But while Elizabethan purgatory resembled the medieval understanding of the doctrine to the Catholic community, it had been given a fresh reintroduction.<sup>62</sup> Allen emphasised that those souls in purgatory had already been given salvation by God; purgatory was not a place to earn salvation or endure penance through misery. Rather, it was a place where the soul could be transformed.

Protestant reformers attacked purgatory because they could find no proof of the doctrine in the Scriptures.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, the existence of purgatory was fiercely debated between Protestant reformers and Catholic traditionalists from the onset of reform in England, lasting well into the Elizabethan period. Thomas More claimed to prove the reality of purgatory in his work *Supplication of Souls*, by citing ten scriptural passages relating to the doctrine.<sup>64</sup> The most obvious scriptural endorsement for prayers for the dead is in the second book of Maccabees, but set aside this message on the grounds that it was uncanonical.<sup>65</sup> The reformers were then left to explain why, without scriptural sanction, purgatory had become the focus of spiritual energy during the medieval period.

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*; William Allen, *Defence and Declaration Touching Purgatory*, fo. 215v.

<sup>62</sup> Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism*, p. 220.

<sup>63</sup> Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 53.

<sup>64</sup> Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p. 53; Thomas More, *Supplication of Souls*, pp. lxxiv-lxxxvii, 195.

<sup>65</sup> Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p. 54.

Their argument was that the clergy had encouraged its high regard and 'associated paraphernalia' in order to fill their purses.<sup>66</sup>

During Elizabeth's reign the feast of All Saints was retained, but was meant to be a day to commemorate the saints, rather than the dead of the community; prayers for the dead were discontinued once again. This was one of the hardest struggles for Elizabethan Catholics, surpassed only by the loss of the eucharist. Well into Elizabeth's reign, authorities were exhausted by the number of cases of bells being rung for the dead on All Saints' Day, which continued across England into the 1580s.<sup>67</sup> When this ritual, once closely associated with purgatory and solemnly practised was finally expelled from the parish church, it was relocated into the fields, where it became customary for one parishioner to hold a torch alight with hay, and families would gather around to pray for the dead. This ritual lasted in some areas of England until the nineteenth century, christening many local fields as 'Purgatory Field'.<sup>68</sup> This ritualised action was called 'teenlay', and William Dugdale mentions it in his 1658 *Antiquities of Warwickshire*. He wrote that the head of the family would carry a lit bundle of hay or straw around a field, chanting:

Fire and Red Low  
Light on my teen low.<sup>69</sup>

This was a community response to care for the souls of the dead when traditional methods had been banned. John Mirk mentions in *The Festyuall*,

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55; William Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises*, pp. 148, 237-8, 249, 302-3, 318.

<sup>67</sup> Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, p. 106.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> William Dugdale, *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (London, 1656), p. 104.

printed in many late fifteenth and early sixteenth century editions, that ‘we rede in olde tyme good people woulde on alhalowen daye bake brede & deale it to all crysten soules’.<sup>70</sup> Some semblance of this survived the Reformation, as Thomas Blount, an antiquarian and lexicographer from Herefordshire, wrote in his 1674 *Glossographia* that:

Soul-masse-cakes, are vertain oaten cakes, which come of the wealthier sort of persons in Lancashire and Herefordshire (among the papists there) use still to give the poor on All Souls day (Nov. 2) and the poor people take themselves oblige’d to say this old verse, in retribution, “God have your soul, bones and all”.<sup>71</sup>

This variety of the refashioning of medieval rituals may have been facilitated by the fact that they did not require the use of prohibited religious artifacts, and is evidence of the importance and significance that prayers for the deceased of the community had on even the post-Reformation parish.<sup>72</sup> But the belief that parishioners had a social responsibility to ‘care’ for the dead made it difficult for this tradition to be forgotten.<sup>73</sup>

The reconception of purgatory after the Reformation may be the most exceptional change in doctrine during this time. Energy that had once been spent on intercessory prayers for the dead henceforth was consumed in the ‘art’ of dying well.<sup>74</sup> The community of the dead were reconceptualised from being spiritual members of the citizenry to being consciously remembered, yet no longer present. Purgatory became ‘memoria’.<sup>75</sup> Peter Marshall has argued that

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<sup>70</sup> John Mirk, *The Festyuall* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1508), p. cli.

<sup>71</sup> Thomas Blount, *Glossographia; or, a dictionary interpreting the hard words of whatsoever language, now used in our refined English tongue* (London: Thomas Newcombe, 1661).

<sup>72</sup> Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, pp. 106-107.

<sup>73</sup> Marshall, *Reformation England*, p. 74.

<sup>74</sup> Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p. 228.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 313.

the loss of purgatory was not significant because its fascination was channeled into other areas of social life, such as the death bed. Social and psychological needs that were met by purgatory were now fulfilled by another outlet.<sup>76</sup>

It would have been interesting to gain some insight during the course of this research into this new practice of 'dying well' within the Catholic perspective. Deprived of the popular rituals once associated with purgatory, it is possible that the bedroom and deathbed became Catholic sacred space because of the spiritual occurrences for the dying and his or her family in the last moments of life. But this is a transformation that would have taken a long time to achieve.

#### *6.4 Prisons*

One area of ordinary space that Elizabethan Catholics were tremendously successful in converting into sacred space was the prison, a space traditionally associated with sin and crime. Both the laity and clergy alike were imprisoned for nonconformity, necessarily generating a sort of Catholic community within penitentiary walls, transforming the temporal space into a form of physical as well as spiritual confession. There was such a high concentration of priests within prisons that incarcerated laypeople could expect accessibility to sacraments at a level that may not have been available outside of prison boundaries.<sup>77</sup> Rees Moore, an aging Marian priest from Rippel in Worcestershire, was imprisoned in the county in 1582. Before his imprisonment, however, he and his brother, Thomas, frequently celebrated Mass at their home in Rippell for

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> McClain, 'Without Church', p. 306.

local recusants. Bishop Whitgift of Worcester wrote to Francis Walsingham that same year that 'I think there are not two worse affected any where, of their calling nor that doo more harme.'<sup>78</sup> Whitgift also wrote that Moore conferred sacraments and shrived the sick in Worcestershire. William Thornbury, a servant from Staffordshire imprisoned at Newgate in London in the 1590s, was in contact with a priest, known as Corbet, though it is unlikely that Corbet was from the Midlands himself.<sup>79</sup> Covert means for priests to confer sacraments were unnecessary at some prisons. A priest named Pilbush was allowed to say Mass at Gloucester gaol by the gaolers. Pilbush had the privilege of a separate cell within the common gaol, where Catholics could come to visit him and hear Mass.<sup>80</sup>

The nature of a prison allowed the incarcerated Catholic community to thrive. Gaolers were paid by neither the central nor local governments, but rather by the prisoners themselves, and could therefore be persuaded, financially or otherwise, to make allowances for prisoners.<sup>81</sup> Within prisons Catholic laypeople and priests sent and received letters; they read Catholic literature that had been smuggled into the prison and hidden; priests said Mass wearing traditional vestments and were frequently in possession of rosary beads, holy water and wax candles.<sup>82</sup> Dorothy Pauncefoot, of Hasfield in Gloucestershire, was in 1590 charged with articles of misdemeanor on account of recusancy. She was said to have had in her 'Custody, many ould masse bookes

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<sup>78</sup> SP 12/156/46, f.46r, 'Bishop Whitgyfte to Walsyngham', 24 December 1582.

<sup>79</sup> McClain, 'Without Church', p. 388.

<sup>80</sup> Richard Challoner, *Memoirs of missionary priests: and other Catholics of both sexes, that have suffered death in England on religious accounts, from the year 1577 to 1684*, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: John T. Green, 1839) p. 252; McClain, 'Without Church', p. 390-391.

<sup>81</sup> McClain, 'Without Church', p. 387.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*



and also such things as belongeth to a masse priest And also many Relykes'.<sup>83</sup> This was of concern to the authorities because she 'hath dailly accesse and Recourse unto such as do lye in prison for Recusancye' and also that she was 'a greate p[er]suader of hir Ma[jestys] true subiects from their due obedience to becom papists.'<sup>84</sup> Although they provided convenient access to sacred space, we ought not to consider prisons reliable safe havens for Catholic clergy or laity. Everard Hanse, a seminary priest from Northamptonshire, entered the Marshalsea to congregate with Catholic prisoners there. He was questioned by authorities, and boldly, or perhaps unwisely, confessed to being a Catholic priest. He was sent to Newgate Prison and later executed.<sup>85</sup>

Prisons also provided a space for priests to congregate with one another. Nicholas Garlick, a seminary priest from Vinting in Gloucestershire, was imprisoned in Derby gaol in 1588. There he convinced the priest Richard Sympson of Ripon in Yorkshire into martyrdom. Sympson had been reprieved, evidently displaying to authorities that he would conform, but he recanted his conformity and was executed alongside Garlick.<sup>86</sup>

Prisons were separate from Protestant space both physically and ritually, and therefore contained practical, usable space, rather than imagined.<sup>87</sup> English Catholics used the religious geography available to them, and incarceration was not viewed as religious restriction.<sup>88</sup> The communion of Catholic laity and clergy transformed the ordinary space of a prison cell into sacred space. The

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<sup>83</sup> SP 12/230/61, f.61r, 'Articles of misdemeanor objected against Mrs Dorothy Pauncefoote for matters of recusancy', January, 1590.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Challoner, *Memoirs*, p. 32.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>87</sup> McClain, 'Without Church', p. 391.

<sup>88</sup> McClain, 'Without Church', p. 391.

congregation of Catholics in prisons created a sense of unity and, likely, much comfort to the prisoners, some of who would have been awaiting execution.<sup>89</sup> As the above examples from the Midlands counties demonstrate, prison space was used for sacred purposes in Midland gaols during the Elizabethan period.

### 6.5 Executions

In the same sense, execution sites could, if only for a brief period of time, be transformed into Catholic sacred space. The gallows were used as a kind of pulpit not only by clergy who were to be executed, but also by the laity.<sup>90</sup>

Elizabethan Catholic martyrs increased the number of religious relics and objects and created new sacred space.<sup>91</sup> Execution sites were potent Catholic spaces available to Catholics as the arena of martyrdom. Like prisons, it is ironic that these Protestant-made and controlled spaces were claimed by the Catholic community as their own, and Catholics used these traumatic occurrences as a means to strengthen their own piety.<sup>92</sup> The government expected these executions to have a disheartening and unnerving effect on the Catholics. But many Catholics who attended the spectacle used the torments of the condemned to fortify their sense of community and identity; going to an execution was an act of piety, like a pilgrimage.<sup>93</sup> Paintings and engravings of such executions were used within sacred space outside of England and may have had similar purposes in England. For example, an image of the martyrdoms at Tyburn might help

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<sup>89</sup> See Patrick McGrath and Joy Rowe, 'The Imprisonment of Catholics for Religion under Elizabeth I', *Recusant History* 20 (1991), pp. 415-433.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, p. 396.

<sup>91</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, p. 84.

<sup>92</sup> McClain, 'Without Church', pp. 393-394.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, p. 395.

create sacred space in a Catholic home. The concept of 'body' was problematic in late-Medieval and early modern thought, and historians such as Michael Foucault and Clifford Geertz have developed this theory and concept. The wickedness of the flesh could be cleansed through pain and suffering, thus rendering the problem of mortal and physical bodies null.<sup>94</sup>

It was not simply the attendance of Catholics at execution sites that created sacred space. Sacred space was created in various ways: by speaking to or being blessed by a future martyr, by hearing the condemned speak or preach, and by praying with or for the condemned. Thomas Belson, a layman from Oxford, was convicted of harbouring two Catholic priests, and executed in Oxford alongside them in 1589. Before he was executed he embraced the bodies of the priests, which were at that moment being quartered, and begged the intercession of their souls.<sup>95</sup> This emphasises the traditional belief that contact with relics was a potent source of grace; in this case, the martyrs were already 'living relics'. Robert Widmerpool of Nottinghamshire, executed at Oaten Hill in Canterbury in 1588 for harbouring priests, thanked God and begged for the prayers of the Catholics present while the rope was around his neck.<sup>96</sup>

Priests at liberty attended executions along with the laity, but their reasons for doing so were different, as these priests had the charge of absolving the condemned priests before death. They were often in disguise, and made their

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<sup>94</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Bodily Miracles and the Resurrection of the Body in the High Middle Ages, in Thomas Kselman (ed.), *Belief in History: Innovative Approaches to European and American Religion* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1991), pp. 70-71.

<sup>95</sup> Challoner, *Memoires*, p. 151.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, p. 142.

way as close to the gallows as possible.<sup>97</sup> The Gloucestershire priest Thomas Alfield was present at the execution of Edmund Campion in 1581. Although Alfield himself does not mention that he was there specifically to absolve Campion, he wrote that the Jesuit gave comfort to the people who lined the road while he was being hurdled from the Tower to Tyburn, while Catholics in the crowd wiped debris that had been thrown at him from his face.<sup>98</sup> Alfield wrote an important text, *A true reporte*, of the executions of Edmund Campion, Ralph Sheldon and Alexander Briant. Printed in London in 1582, it was the 'draft' from which William Allen wrote his *Brief History*, which also formed his argument of *A true, sincere and modest defense of English Catholics*, which was a response to Lord Burghley's *Execution of Justice*. These were two of the most important texts in the religious debate of the sixteenth-century, and directly inspired by Alfield, a Midlands priest.<sup>99</sup>

Catholics about to suffer execution could use the gallows as a pulpit, creating temporary but influential sacred space. Those who spoke at the execution site often asked all Catholics present to pray for them. This created a sense of unity between the observers and the condemned, but also had the spiritual advantage of shortening the prisoners' torments in purgatory. The

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<sup>97</sup> McClain, 'Without Church', p. 396.

<sup>98</sup> E.E. Reynolds, *Campion and Parsons: The Jesuit Mission of 1580-1581* (Sheed & Ward: London, 1980), pp.199-200.

<sup>99</sup> See, Thomas Alfield, *A true reporte of the death & martyrdome of M. Campion Iesuite and preiste, & M. Sherwin, & M. Bryan preistes, at Tiborne the first of December 1581 Obseruid and written by a Catholike preist, which was present therat Wheruuto is annexid certayne verses made by sundrie persons* (London: Richard Verstegen, 1582); William Allen, *A true, sincere and modest defence of English catholiques that suffer for their faith both at home and abroad, against a false, seditious and slanderous libel, entitled: "The execution of justice in England"* (Rouen, 1584); William Cecil, *The Execution of Justice in England* (London, 1583).

aforementioned Everard Hanse ‘desired humbly that all Catholics pray for him and with him’, but when the Protestant ministers asked the people to assist him with prayers, he answered that he would not pray with the heretics, only the Catholics.<sup>100</sup> Catholics in the crowd may have believed their prayers for a future martyr would be particularly powerful in the eyes of God; somewhat like prayers for the dead were believed to be particularly efficacious when closely linked to the Eucharist. Catholics facing death usually told the crowd that they were Catholic, and about to die for their faith, rather than for the treason for which they had been condemned. Humphrey Pritchard, a Welshman who was executed in Oxford in 1589 with Thomas Belson and two priests, declared to all that he was a Catholic, not a traitor, and this was the reason that he must die, though he confessed that he went willingly to God.<sup>101</sup>

In these scenarios, execution sites became places for spiritual contemplation, for both the prisoner and the Catholic observer.<sup>102</sup> Records and research show that the resolve of the Catholics often affected the Protestants in the crowd. An extreme example of this is was the conversion in 1591 from Puritanism to Catholicism by John Gennings, ten days after the execution of his brother, the Staffordshire priest Edmund Gennings. John later wrote a biography of his brother Edmund, published in 1614.<sup>103</sup> That the Catholic community in the Midlands seemed to disregard the official purpose of a public execution (a means to discredit and throw suspicion on papacy amongst the conforming in the

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<sup>100</sup> Challoner, *Memoires*, p. 35.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, p. 151.

<sup>102</sup> McClain, ‘Without Church’, p. 397.

<sup>103</sup> J. Gennings, *The life and death of Mr Edmund Gennings* (St. Omers: T.F. Knox and others, 1614). John Gennings was ordained a priest in 1607, and eventually became a Franciscan monk.

crowd) and used the space which was neither Catholic in origin nor particularly sacred or peaceful, demonstrated the stalwart attitude of the community to retain and refashion the 'space' to revere and practice a new form of Catholicism.

## 6.6 *Martyrologies*

English Catholics had little need to turn to Europe for confirmation of the validity of their faith. England continued to produce miracles, relics and literature, and a great number of these were connected to the Elizabethan martyrs.<sup>104</sup> Initial scholarship demonstrates that Midland Elizabethan martyrs were compared with Biblical saints, those early Christians persecuted for their faith.<sup>105</sup> There are numerous manuscript and published accounts of martyrs acting in supernatural and inexplicable ways during or after their executions, and even several examples of this from the Midland martyrs. Everard Hanse was said to have proclaimed, 'O! Happy Day!' when the executioner took hold of his heart. The heart was also said to have leaped from the fire not once but twice, and had to be held in the flames by a piece of wood.<sup>106</sup> When Edmund Gennings was being dismembered, he shouted 'Oh! It smarts!' To which his fellow condemned, Swithen Wells of London, replied 'Alas! Sweet soul, thy pain is great, indeed, but almost past; pray for me now, most holy saint, that mine may come.'<sup>107</sup> Catholic martyrs were made saints by the living Catholic community in the last moments of life. Gennings' final prayer was to his patron saint, St Gregory, which infuriated

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<sup>104</sup> Walsham, 'Miracles', p. 789.

<sup>105</sup> See Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1535-1603* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), as the authority on Elizabethan martyrdom.

<sup>106</sup> Challoner, *Memoirs*, p. 35.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, p. 166.

the executioner who said, 'God's wounds! His heart is in my hand and yet Gregory is in his mouth'.<sup>108</sup>

Accounts of the martyrs were used by missionary priests to reinforce the virtues of recusancy. In contrast to the reformed belief in grace through faith alone, missionary priests depicted Catholic martyrs as God's own intercessors. John Gerard illustrated this with the account of one Midland martyr, Robert Sutton, by describing the decomposition of Sutton's quarters which were displayed at Stafford gaol. His remains were 'all consumed to the bones', except the flesh of his hands that had frequently been in contact with the communion host.<sup>109</sup> The circulation of the accounts of the martyrs created a kind of ministry, a 'virtual' sacred space.

Elizabethan Catholics filled the gap of medieval relics with the mortal remains of their own martyrs. Every execution witnessed members of the Catholic community attempting to conserve relics, from clothing and possessions, to blood and bones.<sup>110</sup> The thumb of Edmund Gennings was retrieved by a devout woman named Lucy Ridley before the quarter was to be boiled at Newgate. Upon her touch, the thumb came off into her hand.<sup>111</sup> The Spanish ambassador Bernardino de Mendoza wrote to Philip II two nights after the execution of Everard Hanse that 'not a particle of earth which his blood had stained...had not been carried off as a relic, and infinite sums were given for his

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<sup>108</sup> Christine J. Kelly, 'Gennings, Edmund [St Edmund Gennings] (1566–1591)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10516>, accessed 23 Jan 2013].

<sup>109</sup> Walsham, 'Miracles', p. 791.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, p. 794.

<sup>111</sup> Challoner, *Memoirs*, p. 166-167.

shirt and other clothes.’<sup>112</sup> A Mr John Cleaton claimed to witness a person possessed by a ‘furious devil’ being cured by the relic of Robert Sutton, a priest from Burton upon Trent.<sup>113</sup> Not all remains were kept for relics, however. The head and quarters of Nicholas Garlick and those who suffered with him were taken down from poles around Derby by Catholic gentlemen and buried with ‘great decency and reverence’.<sup>114</sup> The Elizabethan Catholic community continued to venerate martyrs as their medieval predecessors had. However, they had new inspirations from their own nation and generation.

### *6.7 Rosaries, Relics, Holy Water and Wells*

The rosary was one of the most powerful religious objects available to post-Reformation Catholics.<sup>115</sup> It was called ‘a paradise of pleasures, a certaine spirituall zodiacke’ by an anonymous author for the English Secret Press in 1598.<sup>116</sup> A rosary was small and discreet; to Elizabethan Catholics it could be both a material object and a ritualized set of prayers.<sup>117</sup> It was meant to:

put vs in minde of the blessed Trinity, the three Theologicall vertues, that is, faith, hope, and charitie, to enforme the three partes of our soule, I mean the vnderstanding, memorie, and will, and allow vs to remember the beginning, middle, and ending of our pilgrimage in this vale of miserie.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Bede Camm, *Lives of the English Martyrs* II (Longmans, Green & Co.: London, 1905), p. 261.

<sup>113</sup> Challoner, *Memoirs*, p. 122.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, p. 129-130.

<sup>115</sup> Anne Dillon, ‘Praying by Number: The Confraternity of the Rosary and the English Catholic Community, c.1580–1700’, *History* 88 (2003), p. 451.

<sup>116</sup> Anon., *A methode, to meditate on the Psalter, or great Rosarie of our blessed Ladie with a preface in the defence and commendation of it: and meditations for euery morning and euening* (English Secret Press: Antwerp, 1598), p. 4.

<sup>117</sup> Lisa McClain, ‘Using What’s at Hand: English Catholic Reinterpretations of the Rosary, 1559-1642’, *The Journal of Religious History* 27 (2003), p. 161.

<sup>118</sup> Anon., *A methode, to meditate on the Psalter, or great Rosarie*, p. 7.



Catholics who found themselves without rosary beads could use improvisation in order to attain some. John Gerard carved rosary beads and crosses out of orange peels while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London, and Cuthbert Mayne, the first priest to be executed during Elizabeth's reign, was arrested in the possession of a homemade rosary of colourful stones that was given to him as thanks for reconciling someone to the Catholic Church.<sup>119</sup>

As previously mentioned, material religious objects were valued for their preservative power. Prior to the Reformation, the belief that items such as holy water, rosaries and relics and the ringing of bells could bestow protection was 'more than merely spiritual or symbolic', it was magical.<sup>120</sup> Holy water was drunk to battle illness and poured onto fields to promote fertility; this view was based on words of the benediction and encouraged by clergy.<sup>121</sup> The therapeutic powers of holy water were far reaching in late medieval England – from giving blessing to houses and food to warding off plague.<sup>122</sup> These sentiments continued into the Elizabethan period within recusant circles. Jane Wiseman, while in prison, threw holy water onto the great tormentor of Catholics Richard Topcliff, who subsequently fell off his horse, much to Wiseman's delight.<sup>123</sup> This story and other similar tales, such as Margaret Clitherow's fate, were used within

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<sup>119</sup> Williams, 'Contesting the Everyday', p. 248; McClain, 'Using What's at Hand', p. 161.

<sup>120</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, p. 32.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33. Thomas states that Jane Wiseman was executed for harbouring priests. She was indeed sentenced to death on 3 July 1598; following the example of Margaret Clitherow she would not give a plea at her trial and was to suffer the sentence of *peine forte et dure*. It seems that she was eager to be martyred, but her sentence was lessened to life in prison, and upon the accession of James I she received a royal pardon. Claire Walker, 'Wiseman, Jane (d. 1610)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/69040>, accessed 3 June 2012]

the Catholic community to boost recusant morale and also demonstrate the influence of Catholic symbols and objects.<sup>124</sup>

Holy relics also had power to protect, and all churches would be in possession of a relic, as altars needed one to be sanctified. Powerful relics would have been found in monasteries, cathedrals or at pilgrimage sites, but it would be interesting to have a better understanding of the spiritual power of relics following reform. During the reign of Elizabeth, the possession of an *agnus dei* was especially offensive, though they were in high demand by Jesuit missionaries.<sup>125</sup>

It seems that, at least among Elizabethan recusant gentry families, obtaining a relic from the continent was both desirable and easily accomplished.<sup>126</sup> In 1584, Lady Throckmorton of Coughton Court, Warwickshire had enough religious support from various recusant priests that she was able to send one away to Rome with the purpose of him returning with relics of the Virgin's hair and bones.<sup>127</sup> Late-medieval devotion to saints was focused on images; this differed from the early medieval period, when saints' relics were the centre of parish respect.<sup>128</sup> Pilgrimages began to be based on an idol or icon of a saint, rather than a relic, and minor cults were quickly established around such images.<sup>129</sup> The idea of finding protection by using a religious object prevailed within the Elizabethan Midland Catholic community. Similar to the spiritual

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<sup>124</sup> Walker, 'Wiseman, Jane', *DNB*

[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/69040>, accessed 3 June 2012].

<sup>125</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, p. 60.

<sup>126</sup> Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, p. 75.

<sup>127</sup> SP 12/173/1, f.40, Hugh Cholmondeley to Francis Walsingham, 25 September 1584.

<sup>128</sup> Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 167.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

power of rosaries, relics once again became influential. An Oxford recusant named John Allyn was allegedly in possession of an amount of Christ's blood in 1591, and was selling it at £20 a drop to protect the holder of any harm.<sup>130</sup> The protections that religious objects such as rosaries, relics, holy water and shrines gave to the faithful mattered greatly to them.<sup>131</sup> The argument that Protestant reformers gave against this – that veneration to objects and images was superstitious – was condescending, lacked empathy and therefore produced lay hostility that eventually gave birth to recusancy in the Elizabethan period.

The generation of Elizabethan martyrs relics, and their preservation in well-known places like Stonyhurst, but also Midland houses and churches, allows us some insight into post-Reformation lived religious experience. The zeal that English Catholics had for relics can be explained by the drought of priests and the lack of official places for worship. Relics, when obtainable, were portable, makeshift material substitutions for approved forms of worship. Collecting and preserving English relics was also an active method of promoting Counter-Reformation ideals, thus supporting the notion of Catholic identity exclusive of the reformed church. As A.M. Greeley has noted, Catholic paraphernalia is an indication of extensive and profound religious insight that predisposes Catholics to see the Holy and God in everything. Greeley has termed this the 'Catholic Imagination', and stresses that this imagination itself can be sacramental, because the reality created by Catholics is a 'revelation of the presence of God.'<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, p. 34.

<sup>131</sup> J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 42-43.

<sup>132</sup> Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 1.

After the enforcement of the Elizabethan Settlement of Religion in 1559, methodically demolishing or removing religious images from the parish church resulted in the collective memory of Catholic material culture slowly fading, perhaps causing resentment among the people.<sup>133</sup> The queen and her councilors were aware of this fact, and the slow but thorough deterioration of the old faith may have been what the queen had in mind all along, though it is likely that this system had varying degrees of success that were dependent on location and time. Religious objects, as objects of memory, could rekindle a legitimate past for the Catholic community, through 'Catholic imagination'. These *mementos mori* were often ceremonial and allegorical, and symbolized events, people or time, and were seen as seditious by authorities.<sup>134</sup> They could include relics, rosaries, vestments, *agnus deis*, even clothing, such as the chemise that Mary Stuart wore to her execution, which is still held on display at Coughton Court.

Physical changes within the parish church were not immediate. From evidence in commissioners' reports, it is known that altars survived country-wide well into the 1560s, as did images of saints and crucifixes.<sup>135</sup> Thomas Bentham had to remind the churchwardens of Coventry and Lichfield in 1565 that church altars must be clean, with no monuments or images, and that idols and Latin mass books should not be hidden in certain areas of the church.<sup>136</sup> The command for physical reforms after the accession of Elizabeth seems to have been exercised in a relaxed manner. Ronald Hutton proposes two reasons for

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<sup>133</sup> Williams, 'Contesting the Everyday', p. 243.

<sup>134</sup> Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 39.

<sup>135</sup> Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, p. 107.

<sup>136</sup> SP 12/36/86, f.87r, f.89r, 'Instructions by Tho. Bentham to Mr Sale', 28 April 1565.

this: firstly, the modest tone of the Religious Settlement may account for the lack of fervent obedience; and secondly, the overwhelming fact that the queen was an unmarried woman with no direct Protestant heir who could conceivably be carried off to her grave at any time by illness or assassination hindered acceptance of the Settlement.<sup>137</sup> Therefore, it is of little surprise that Elizabethan parishioners were in no rush to once again remodel their church – it no doubt appeared wiser to wait until the reign was more stable.<sup>138</sup>

The assimilation that was required by the Elizabethan government for all English people to conform to the Religious Settlement could be compared to the early medieval period when all pagans were compelled to convert to Christianity; growing pains are to have been expected and there would necessarily have been some overlap in the shift, especially with regard to objects and rituals. For example, the pagan magical springs which dotted the English countryside were transformed into holy wells to be associated with a particular Catholic saint, and festivals relating to the natural year were incorporated into the Christian calendar; they were not abolished or destroyed, but rather refashioned to fit with the new Christian beliefs of the country.<sup>139</sup> Late-medieval parishioners would make offerings to these wells, much as their early-medieval ancestors would have made sacrifices.<sup>140</sup>

Naturally, the declaration of natural sacred sites as invalid by reformed authorities could not deter everyone from continuing to find spiritual fulfillment in them, as social memory and habit are two very powerful aspects of the human

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<sup>137</sup> Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, p. 108.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, p. 54.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

psyche. This seems to have been particularly true for holy wells. During reform movements pilgrimages and prayers at holy wells were discouraged for several reasons. People who travelled to wells for the medicinal power of the water were blamed for idolatry because any ‘cures’ that the well provided must have been procured from either the work of the devil or from fraud.<sup>141</sup> Even so, holy wells retained significance among Catholic laity, and Protestant officials were forced to regard the springs as having medicinal or therapeutic effects from the sulphurous water, rather than magical capacities.<sup>142</sup> In Gloucestershire, St Anthony’s Well, near Flaxley Abbey in the Forest of Dean, was continually visited after the dissolution of the monasteries, where pilgrims would travel for relief of skin conditions and rheumatism.<sup>143</sup> Also in Gloucestershire, the conduit house of St Kenelm’s Well in Winchcombe is still enshrined in sixteenth-century Cotswold limestone, erected by Lord Chandos of Sudeley, to commemorate one of Elizabeth I’s visits to Sudeley Castle.<sup>144</sup> The stone well-house of St Margaret’s Well, in Binsey Oxfordshire, was not destroyed until 1639, after which the well became disused. Pilgrims included Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon, and the waters were said to cure infertility.<sup>145</sup> Other Midlands wells did not fare so well – St Kenelm’s Well in Romsley, Worcestershire, was destroyed on the orders of Edwin Sandys as Bishop of Worcester, who campaigned against the superstitious nature of pilgrimages to wells.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, p. 397.

<sup>142</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, p. 80; Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, p. 220.

<sup>143</sup> Janet Bord, *Holy Wells in Britain: A Guide* (Loughborough: Heart of Albion Press, 2008), p. 57.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

### *6.8 Conclusion*

The response of the Midland Catholics to the destruction of medieval spaces for worship was to preserve, adapt and innovate. Religious persecution aided the perception of popular Catholic identity and community that focused on the martyrs and relics. However, this also promoted traditional devotions that the missionary priests seemed not to have expected, because martyrologies facilitated lay independence from ecclesiastical control.<sup>147</sup>

Prisons and execution sites provided spaces where Catholics could come together to cultivate their sense of identity and faith, if only for a time. They acted as both temporary and permanent sacred space, and undoubtedly had a strengthening effect for the observers, and provided comfort for the incarcerated and condemned. For example, Tyburn in London, hallowed by centuries of Catholic blood, became a specially potent sacred space for Catholics, hence the foundation of Tyburn Convent for perpetual adoration as close as possible to the place of the majority of Catholic martyrdoms. Afterwards, martyrologies and relics continued within this trend.

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<sup>147</sup> Walsham, 'Miracles', p. 811.

## 7. Encountering 'The Other'

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The previous chapter described the various objects and spaces that Midland Catholics used in their practice of traditional religion. This in itself 'separated' Catholics from the reformed community, at least in the practice of their faith. In many aspects of social life, however, the Catholic and reformed communities were integrated with one another. In this sense, historians have now moved away from the older 'Catholic' history because it is accepted that the contemporary Catholic communities were not separate from the rest of society. The history of tolerance of Catholicism in Elizabethan England is more difficult to discern than that of hostility. Laws that encouraged intolerance and violent actions that occurred because of opposition towards Catholics are easily found in historical records. Compared to this, acts of toleration were infrequently documented because these acts of benevolence would not have been noticed by authorities, unless they themselves broke the law. In cases where acts of religious tolerance were documented, these were usually presented in negative terms, as tolerance was condemned by authorities as deplorable and reckless; it was branded a socially deviant act in order to discourage its practice.<sup>1</sup> Since acts of toleration were just that – actions rather than debate or polemic, instances of neighbourly harmony between Protestants and Catholics must be detected inexplicitly within the historical evidence. This chapter will examine the way in

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<sup>1</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 29.



which Catholics were 'tolerated' in the Midlands, and how they responded with varying degrees of quiescence or resistance.

### *7.1 Anti-Catholic Laws and Reactions*

In order to understand toleration as practiced in Reformation England, one must recognise that the word bore a different significance and value in the sixteenth-century than it does today. To tolerate was not necessarily akin to acknowledging a fair and objective understanding and respect for a viewpoint that differed from one's own, nor did it equate to an understanding that different modes of belief and behaviour were permissible within one society. In other words, 'toleration' did not mean 'religious freedom'. To quote Alexandra Walsham, tolerance in early modern England was 'to permit or licence something of which one emphatically disapproved.'<sup>2</sup> To be 'tolerant' of an opposing belief system, for example Catholicism, was at the same time to proclaim it unrighteous and sinful; hardly an act of acceptance, tolerance was granted haphazardly and could be revoked without warning.<sup>3</sup> With this in mind, we might wonder why 'tolerance' was offered at all, but the queen and Council used forbearance as a tactic to discourage domestic rebellion and European threats.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> See Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Adam Morton and Nadine Lewycky, *Getting Along: Religious Identities and Confessional Relations in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012).

An analysis of the early modern theory of tolerance reveals results that are more complex than the set of beliefs surrounding it may suggest. Historians have tended to accord a greater importance to belief over practice with regard to religious toleration in a manner that may imperil historical truth when put to the test of research.<sup>5</sup> This is why research into the Catholic community's relationship with its Protestant neighbours is relevant and important. At the grassroots level, at least initially, the reformed and Catholic communities seem to have accepted one another with a version of tolerance that was fostered by self-consciousness, uncertainty and political expediency. Related to this is the difficulty in differentiating between malevolence towards individuals and malevolence towards the religious ideologies they adhered to.<sup>6</sup> Walsham has argued that, 'We need to build into our analysis the insight that abstract hatred of a false religion as a system of thought was by no means incompatible with cordial relations with its human adherents.'<sup>7</sup> In other words, it was possible to have friendly and benevolent relationships with members of differing religious camps (sometimes themselves not very well defined), without the need to act harmfully against individuals who declared opposing beliefs. An example of this is the parish of Brailes in Warwickshire, where the Catholic community had a clandestine chapel and school. Here the Catholic parishioners were actually protected from the authorities by their Protestant neighbours.<sup>8</sup> Brailes stood for continuity, but the reaction of many Catholics to keep a balance within the parish was to choose church papism. In the parish of Brailes, a secret Mass centre with two concealed

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<sup>5</sup> Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Philip Suffolk, *Catholic Brailes: Some Notes on its History* (Brailes: Church of Ss Peter and Paul, n.d), p. 1.

holes for hiding priests was established in a rectory barn. The Bishop family of the parish supported a clandestine Catholic school, and the Protestants of the parish showed great tolerance, as no Catholic was ever betrayed. This suggests that relationships between neighbours were not necessarily restricted by religion; it was much more complicated than Protestant against Catholic. The Protestant community conspired against the efforts of the state, unfortunately the question of how widespread this was is unclear.

The hierarchy of the church felt the anxiety and tension caused by religious plurality. In 1571, Edwin Sandys (then Bishop of London but recently Bishop of Worcester, 1559-1570) preached at Westminster Abbey and implored the Members of Parliament in the congregation not to ignore the issue. He said:

This liberty, that men may openly profess the diversity of religion, must needs be dangerous...One God, one king, one faith, one profession, is fit for one monarchy and commonwealth. Division weakeneth: concord strengtheneth...Let conformity and unity in religion be provided for; and it shall be as a wall of defense into this realm.<sup>9</sup>

Historians exploring the themes of toleration and hostility during the English Reformation have noted contemporary reliance on the work of St Augustine, the fifth century Bishop of Hippo, who outlined a pattern of religious devotion that would last through the Middle Ages. Later in his life, and negating his earlier view on religious freedom, Augustine reasoned that pressure must be applied against those who refused to accept Christianity. He encouraged a three pronged attack against paganism, exhorting social, political and ecclesiastical

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<sup>9</sup> John Ayre (ed.), *The Sermons of Edwin Sandys* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1842), p. 49.

forces to oblige those who erred from authorised religion to conform.<sup>10</sup>

Augustine encouraged physical penalties against those who would not conform to the Christian church and English authorities likewise adopted this method.

Elizabeth, however, recoiled at the idea of imposing corporal or capital punishment upon her subjects, and stalled when her Councillors pressed for harsher treatment for non-conformists. This was not because of a particularly humane character trait or feminine distaste towards violence, but rather because she thought it was politically inadvisable. In response to her reluctance to authorise the execution of her cousin, Mary Stuart, Elizabeth was exhorted by her bishops to disregard 'foolish pitie' as early as 1572. Elizabeth delayed the inevitable execution until 1587, after Mary Stuart had been imprisoned in England for nineteen years.<sup>11</sup> By this time, rather resembling Augustine's change of heart, Elizabeth's former aim of avoiding physical punishment had faded to an acceptance of the necessity of this for political stability.

Eventually Elizabeth was compelled to set aside her reservations over physical punishment. Her qualms were due to the need for balance between foreign and domestic threats – she could not risk persecuting Catholics in England, and she did not dare ignore the threat from Catholics overseas. Starting with the arrival of Pope Pius V's bull of excommunication in 1570, followed by the advent of seminary priests from the continent, and then various poorly planned coups and plots linked with Mary Stuart and consequently the Catholic

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<sup>10</sup> John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558-1689* (Harrow: Pearson Education, 2000), pp. 24, 26-27, 48-49; Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>11</sup> Patrick Collinson, 'The Elizabethan Exclusion Crisis and the Elizabethan Polity' *Proceedings of the British Academy* 84 (1994), pp. 84-85; Collinson, 'The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I' in *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1994), pp. 45-46; Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, p. 45.

community, anti-Catholic laws were enforced. By the late 1580s, and with the aftermath of the Spanish Armada, intolerance of Catholics and the consequent anti-Catholic legislation were well developed. This anti-Catholic dialogue was powerful and significant, and the defence of persecution was believed to be both essential and righteous by the majority of the populace.<sup>12</sup>

The debate over whether or not outward conformity was enough to meet the requirements of a loyal citizen remained prominent throughout the reign. The majority argued that religious variance was perilous, and that conformity was the way to political and social balance, as Edwin Sandys preached in his above quoted sermon. However, we should not view this preoccupation with outward conformity as an act of indirect tolerance towards non-conformists, as the laws were intolerant in their composition.<sup>13</sup> Differing from her father's and siblings' reigns, Elizabeth approached religious conformity with prudent patience on account of the dangerous instability of the time. Her method to eradicate Catholicism was to subject the community to weekly reformed services, believing that in time the sermons would be incorporated into their belief system, and conformity would simply be adopted.<sup>14</sup> Even so, it cannot be argued that the campaign for conformity was purely an administrative move. The lords and commons submitted a petition to Elizabeth in 1576 stating:

Hindrance and increase of obstinate papists, which ever since your majesty's sworn enemy the pope did by his bull pronounce definitive sentence against your highness's person and proceedings, here given evident testimony of their wilful disobedience to your majesty, in that they forbear to participate with your majesty's faithful subjects in prayer

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<sup>12</sup> Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, p. 49.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

and administration of sacraments, wherein they most manifestly declare that they carry very unsound and undutiful hearts unto you majesty.<sup>15</sup>

In this sense, obedience to the crown was in itself a religious obligation.

Historians such as Michael Questier have found that the imposition of conformity was one that the higher clergy took very seriously as their own responsibility for the spiritual health of English parishioners; they were not content to allow church papism, but genuinely strove to convert non-conformists.<sup>16</sup> Coupled with the efforts to convert the Catholic community – which ought to be called a ‘parish community’ in these early years – through Protestant integration, authorities initiated a vigorous attack on missionary priests and the laity that protected them. The strategy behind this was to cut off any Catholic support available to the community. Again, this method required patience, and it did not satisfy the more vigorous Protestants.<sup>17</sup> The matter of ‘conformity’ then was of great importance, but one that was approached with caution.

The church and state depended upon unpaid agents such as pursuivants, and also justices of the peace, sheriffs and church constables to enforce statutes and encourage conformity. These were necessary supports that higher authorities relied upon, but for the historian they make the distinction between genuine prosecution and, to quote Walsham, ‘judicially sanctioned violence and illegal vigilante action’, muddled and unclear.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, when records of

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<sup>15</sup> Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller and Mary Beth Rose (eds.), ‘The Lords and Commons’ petition to the queen, 2 March 1576’, in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), p. 172.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580–1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 120–125.

<sup>17</sup> Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, p. 62.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

pursuivants or local authorities and Catholics show a clash among neighbours, it is difficult to know for sure if this is because of religious differences or rather local disputes manifesting in various ways, or if the two can even be separated. In the west Midlands, for example, a local pursuivant threatened a crippled Catholic with a pistol, and also took milk that had been given to an elderly woman as alms, and washed his hands in it.<sup>19</sup> This example seems to reflect more the abuse of power rather than the desire to impose religious conformity. In another Midland example, parishioners were barred from interring members of the Catholic community within the churchyard. A well-known instance of this was the burial of Alice Wellington in Herefordshire in 1605, where the Catholics of the community, about forty to fifty people, decided to perform the rite of burial by themselves. On the morning of the burial, the vicar of the parish heard the group assembling in the churchyard, very close to his quarters. It was about six o'clock in the morning, shortly after the sun had risen. He heard the ringing of a little bell, and, his curiosity piqued, looked out his window to see forty or fifty people assembled. The group bore a saints-bell, a cross, and some burning tapers. The vicar claimed the group was armed with swords, bills and staves. Before the vicar could dress and admonish the group, the body had been buried and the ceremony ended. Regardless, when he came near and scolded them for their boldness, he claimed to have been threatened with his life.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> John Morris, *The Troubles of Our Catholic Forefather, Related by Themselves* (London: Burns and Oates, 1877), p. 30.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Hammond, 'The late commotion of certaine papists in Herefordshire Occasioned by the death of one Alice Wellington, a recusant, who was buried after the popish maner, in the towne of Allens-Moore, neere Hereford, vpon Tuesday in Whitsun weeke last past. 1605. With other excellent matter thereby occasioned. Truely set forth' (1605), STC (2nd ed.) / 25232.

Burial of their dead among the Catholic community would have been an unrelenting complication. Sacraments and devotions could, in theory, be celebrated within the home, or in other sacred spaces. But burial of the dead had to be done in the churchyard, and as they were often excommunicates, Catholics were barred. As Christopher Haigh wrote, 'Everyone wanted a Christian burial – and the Church of England had the graveyards'.<sup>21</sup> Detailed records of Midland Catholic burials, such as that of Alice Wellington, come after the reign of Elizabeth, and this may be because admonitions barring them from burial in the churchyard are lacking from visitation articles, until 1601.<sup>22</sup> Even hereafter the registers rarely record a Catholic burial, though the recusant William Tomlinson of Tamworth, Staffordshire, was recorded as 'buried in a ditch' in 1606.<sup>23</sup>

Peter Marshall believes that the reticence of the Elizabethan records on Catholic burials suggests widespread conspiracy on part of the Catholic community to bury their dead in the churchyard without the rites of the reformed church, though it is unclear to what extent the clergy or churchwardens would have authorised this, or even known of it.<sup>24</sup> It seems that when cases of a Catholic burial were reported to authorities, churchwardens admitted they knew of the burial, but not where it had taken place. The vicar and churchwardens of Desborough, Northamptonshire, claimed that they were aware that a recusant woman named Dorothy Weston had died on 11 April 1607,

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<sup>21</sup> Christopher Haigh, *The Plain Man's Pathways to Heaven: Kinds of Christianity in Post-Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> W. Frere and W. Kennedy (eds.), *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation* 3 Vols (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1910).

<sup>23</sup> Godfrey Anstruther, 'Recusant Burials', *London Recusant*, 1 (1971), p. 105.

<sup>24</sup> Peter Marshall, 'Confessionalisation and Community in the Burial of Catholics, c.1570-1700', in Nadine Lewycky and Adam Morton, *Getting Along? Religious Identities and Confessional Relations in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), pp. 60-61.



and they knew that a grave had been made for her in the churchyard, but they pleaded ignorance in knowing if she had actually been buried there, or not.<sup>25</sup>

The greatest penalty the church could impose upon non-conformists was excommunication (remembering that those recusants executed were punished as traitors by the state, not for their religion). Excommunication had both social and legal consequences; excommunicates could not receive sacramental rites in the reformed church, nor could they be married, have their new-borns baptised, nor could their dead be buried in consecrated ground.<sup>26</sup> They could be ostracised from society, and anyone who fraternised with an excommunicate could suffer the same penalty. Excommunication eventually lost its power through overuse.<sup>27</sup> The church courts could do little else to those Catholics who considered excommunication irrelevant, and the impact of this punishment seems to have been minimal at best. According to the Midlands Recusant Rolls, excommunication was used sparingly. It is unclear how excommunicated Catholics reacted to this, if it was accepted or disregarded.

Catholic identity did not rule out communal identity. A Catholic family or individual was still part of the parish grouping, and this suggests that the idea of what constituted 'orthodoxy' was continually being developed throughout Elizabeth's reign, at least in the Midlands.

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>26</sup> Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, p. 73.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Marshall, *Reformation England, 1480-1642* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2003), p. 180; Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, p. 74.

## 7.2 Religious Identity and Communal Culture

At first glance a study of post-Reformation Catholics in the Midland counties may seem as if it could not bear comparison with studies of Lancashire or Yorkshire. This is partly because of the inherent problems for historians in studying a non-conformist network; specifically that it is easier to imagine such a community solely through the traditional medium of spies, plotters and martyrs and also because of past research in these areas which has proven to be teeming with these romantic characters.<sup>28</sup> The Midlands as a whole has been neglected in studies of the post-Reformation Catholic community and networks, even though the region was to play an important role in the development of the Gunpowder Plot and also in the move towards Catholic Emancipation in the nineteenth century.

Differing from the normal model of research into recusancy which focuses on the county, it may be more relevant to understand the struggle between Protestants and Catholics in terms of regional community, culture, patronage and networks rather than solely on the basis of numbers and militancy, as the foundation of a community must include more than obedience and disobedience.<sup>29</sup> This is not to suggest that Catholics should be defined chiefly by their struggle against the 'other'. Studies have shown that early modern people were connected with numerous groups of people at any particular time; groups

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<sup>28</sup> Michael Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c. 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 60.

<sup>29</sup> Questier, *Catholicism and Community*, p. 60.

which could change over the course of years.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, it is not only difficult but also unwise to construct a 'typical' model of community, as it was constantly in flux and was naturally changeable among individuals, counties and with time.

Keith Wrightson has argued that the early modern parish 'was in many ways a community, an association of neighbours, a unit of identity and belonging, a primary group – but one perennially defined and redefined by processes of inclusion and exclusion.'<sup>31</sup> As a result, community was an expression of 'collective identity'. It was in a constant state of refashioning, both for the individual and the masses. For example, Duffy has defined the 'parish community' as a combination of both the living and the dead, with the powerful impact of this understanding of community as reaching beyond the normal temporal bounds.<sup>32</sup> Duffy does not write about the excluded in the community, and his view of the medieval parish community is a very harmonious one, while Bossy, by contrast, emphasises the capacity of the medieval parish for reconciliation.<sup>33</sup> Peace making was all important precisely because these were quite fractious and quarrelsome communities, especially during times of local or national unrest.

If community is so difficult to identify because of its multifaceted features, is it even possible to identify the defining characteristics of a community?

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<sup>30</sup> Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington, 'Introduction: Communities in Early Modern England', in Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington, *Communities in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Keith Wrightson, 'The Politics of the Parish', in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle (eds.) *Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), p. 12.

<sup>32</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 327-337.

<sup>33</sup> John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press Ltd, 1976), ch 1.

Shepard and Withington produced a six-part template of the essential qualities of a community. They claim that a community can be defined by 1) the established order and how this was followed, 2) the people who were included and those who were not, either voluntarily or purposefully excluded, 3) material culture which defines the community, 4) geography, 5) time period, 6) and the language 'by which it was legitimised'.<sup>34</sup> By applying these models to research of Catholicism in the Midlands, it may be possible to discern changing trends in communities between the 1560s and the 1580s.

Even though we begin to see the emergence of a new Catholic community in the 1560s and 1570s, it is not helpful to see the early years of Elizabeth's reign as negligible with regard to Catholic history because this was the period in which future recusants were developing and defining boundaries between themselves and the government. The formation of Catholic networks and communities must have been a lengthy process because of the period of confusion after the Religious Settlement and the time it took for Catholics to be separated from the conforming parish. The Elizabethan Catholic communities of the 1570s onwards were not immediately ones of missionaries and martyrs.<sup>35</sup> The Elizabethan Catholics who have been well researched are those of the 1580s; they were influenced by the missionaries' work and by their Counter-Reformation Catholicism; they are also easily recognised in contemporary sources. Catholics of the 1560s were dissimilar from those of the 1580s – 'Perhaps no less self-

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<sup>34</sup> Shepard and Withington, 'Introduction', p. 12.

<sup>35</sup> Lucy Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 182.

sacrificing and idealistic' but they 'lived and worked in a different intellectual world.'<sup>36</sup>

Once a distinct community can be discerned, however, it is important to understand that there is little room for generalisations within Elizabethan Catholicism. In between the recusant and the church papist there seems to have been a grey area where Catholics moved from one position to another depending on either their conviction at the time or the mood of persecution. Some Catholics remained devoted to the rituals and beliefs of the past but struggled once they became unavailable to them, while others re-fashioned themselves into a new form of Catholic community. Many moved back and forth between these different states, according to circumstances. For example, Elizabeth Rolston of Balshall in Warwickshire, promised conformity to the commissioners' in 1592, as did Lady Philippa Gyfford of Sheldon in the same county, who wrote to the commissioners' after their visit, claiming to have 'reformed hir selfe'.<sup>37</sup> These methods and practices of the English Catholic communities are impossible to generalise, making themselves all the more intriguing and worthy of research.

Disobedience in the form of non-conformity is difficult to relate to the formation of a Catholic community or a personal Catholic identity. Lists, such as commissioners' reports and Recusancy Rolls, need to be analysed in conjunction with other documents, lest the example that they give of Catholics as separate from the parochial community be taken out of context, for they were still members of the administrative parish.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>37</sup> SP 12/243, f/202, Book containing the second certificate of the commissioners for the county of Warwick, November [?] 1592.

<sup>38</sup> Questier, *Catholicism and Community*, p. 17.

Knowing the difficulties that come with county studies and the 'recusant thesis' that focuses narrowly on a small geographical area such as a county or a town, it is worthwhile to employ less constrained methods and approaches on this research. Even if a project is county based, it does not need to be exclusively so, as there was room for members of the Midland Catholic community to have contacts with communities or individuals elsewhere.<sup>39</sup> Questier found that the recusant Brownes of Sussex did not fit the model of a reclusive gentry family, because Anthony Browne, the Viscount Montague, engaged in political activities in the local area and at court. Through an internal analysis of late Tudor and early Stuart Catholic community, rather than the usual external look from bureaucratic records such as those from church courts, the Exchequer and the high commissioners, Questier was able to gain an interpretation of the changes that the community underwent during the Reformation.<sup>40</sup> Thomas Tresham of Rushton, Northamptonshire, was similar to Anthony Brown in his non-reclusiveness.

While Questier found that the Browne family continued to be active within the local community, Bossy argued that a new community was born when Catholic families retreated into seigneurial households. Even though this retreat restricted them from the public elements of Catholicism such as festivals and processions, otherwise the familiar customs remained intact, if only within doors.<sup>41</sup> This loss could be limited depending on the size and influence of the family in question. If a priest was present, perhaps disguised as a steward,

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<sup>39</sup> See chapter 3 of this dissertation.

<sup>40</sup> Questier, *Catholicism and Community*, p. 179.

<sup>41</sup> John Bossy, 'The Character of Elizabethan Catholicism', *Past and Present* 62 (1962), p. 40.

chaplain or tutor, a home could be fashioned into a new type of parish.<sup>42</sup> The priest Hugh Hall resided with the Arden family of Park Hall, Warwickshire, disguised as a gardener.<sup>43</sup> Lord Vaux of Harrowden Hall in Northamptonshire famously argued that the estate was a parish in itself, because it had a private chapel.<sup>44</sup> A visitation book by the Archdeacon of Northampton recorded for the parish of Harrowden Magna:

We do present the right honourable William Lord Harrowden, his household and familiars and divers servants not to frequent the parish church of Harrowden aforesaid nor receive the holy communion in the parish afore rehearsed a small number or very few etc. Also we present my Lord's schoolmaster. His honour did claim his house to be a parish by itself as one of the churchwardens affirmith.<sup>45</sup>

The seigneurial parish was a complex network, but it did not necessarily involve recusancy. Members of Catholic gentry families at times attended reformed services, in order to protect the integrity of the household from the stigma of recusancy.<sup>46</sup> The gentry families who subsequently created a parish within their homes were motivated by the integrity of the religion which they consolidated into their households.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, Elizabethan Catholicism cannot be understood solely through the restructuring of gentry worship habits. To reject the religious commitment of Catholics who did not choose recusancy is to place too stringent a definition on religious commitment. It was during the early years

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare became Shakespeare* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), pp. 157-158.

<sup>44</sup> Godfrey Anstruther, *Vaux of Harrowden: A Recusant Family* (Newport: R.H. Johns Limited, 1953), p. 113. The original document that Anstruther used is a visitation book of the archdeacon of Northampton, (Pet. Archdeacon's Visit, 1581-1583, f. 20). Anstruther notes that the document is much damaged by damp, and now it is unfortunately too damaged to view at the Northampton Country Record Office.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

of Elizabeth's reign that a new Catholic community began to form. For the first two decades of Elizabeth's reign, men and women who continued to keep a Catholic tradition within their own households adopted minimal acts of conformity 'with no sense of strain or moral discomfort.'<sup>48</sup>

It must also be remembered that at any one time an English Catholic could be part of any number of communities, not all of which would have been 'Catholic' or even religious by definition. As members of a parish, Catholics would have had contacts with conforming neighbours, even family members. The Catholic Edward Arden had business ties with Sir Thomas Lucy, though this relationship was acrimonious in nature.<sup>49</sup> Thomas Tresham was a client of both Lord Burghley and Christopher Hatton.<sup>50</sup> There may have been fractures within the Catholic community, especially by the 1580s, when some members found that they no longer shared the same religious commitment, such as baptism, marriage, funeral rites, Sunday worship and feast-days, with other members of the community that was initially formed by and amongst themselves.

After the Religious Settlement of 1559, very few Midland Catholics separated themselves completely from the Elizabethan Church; even the future radical recusant Sir Thomas Tresham conformed until 1580, and Ralph Sheldon attended reformed services until the excommunication of the queen in 1570.<sup>51</sup> Pius V banned church attendance of English Catholics in 1566, and sent Laurence

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<sup>48</sup> Bossy, 'The Character of Elizabethan Catholicism', p. 41.

<sup>49</sup> Greenblatt, *Will in the World*, p. 160.

<sup>50</sup> Julian Lock, 'Tresham, Sir Thomas (1543–1605)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27712, accessed 20 Aug 2015 14 Aug 2013].

<sup>51</sup> C.D. Gilbert, 'Catholics in the Diocese of Worcester, 1580-1', *Midland Catholic History* 1 (1991), p. 19.



Vaux back to England to promote and enforce the pope's ruling. Vaux's mission was successful in some areas of England, particularly Lancashire where the gentry, who either harboured or had access to priests, chose recusancy.<sup>52</sup> Past research has shown that Vaux's message of a separate Catholic Church also reached county Durham and Yorkshire to a considerable degree, with calls to reconcile with the Catholic Church.<sup>53</sup> When Catholics were eventually urged into recusancy by missionaries in the late 1570s, all did not meet the call with enthusiastic compliance.<sup>54</sup> Haigh's argument for Vaux's success in the northern counties does not hold true for the Midlands; Marian priests were active all over the Midlands counties, saying Masses and administering the sacraments to the gentry and laity, but there is no evidence that they actively promoted recusancy or a separate Catholic Church before the arrival of missionary priests.

The Jesuits had the prevailing conviction that Catholic community and identity could only be constructed around complete and unrelenting recusancy.<sup>55</sup> Catholics who did separate themselves from the church may not have come to the decision lightly as, among other reasons, it likely meant leaving behind generations of family tradition of attending the same church. Deceased members of their family would have been laid to rest in the burial ground, and the physical aspect of community would have been expressed within the church. Members of the Throckmorton family continued to be buried at St Peter's Church in Coughton, demonstrating the complex nature of recusancy. Recusants also had

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<sup>52</sup> Christopher Haigh, *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 185.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 185-190.

<sup>54</sup> Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Trials of Margaret Clitherow* (London: Continuum, 2011), p. 49.

<sup>55</sup> Lake and Questier, *Margaret Clitherow*, p. 49.

had to face the question of what church they now belonged to, and therefore the task of refashioning themselves and their identities into something new.<sup>56</sup> It seems that the Catholic communities of the Midlands cannot be simplified into a general category; some might cling on to medieval forms of devotion, whilst being politically avant-garde, and vice-versa. The community itself was divided into those who were looking to the past and those who were looking towards the future.

The tendency to examine post-Reformation lay Catholics as swiftly converted or as 'parish Anglicans' can be misleading. Questier argued that 'the accession of James Stuart was seen by many religious engagés, Catholics as well as Protestants, as ushering in a new era – an era in which much of the agenda of uniformity and conformity would be up for negotiation and amendment.'<sup>57</sup> In other words, there is a greater chance of historical visibility after 1603. This interpretation shows the continuation of the Catholic community during the Stuart period as the commencement of something new, rather than the prolonging of earlier communities.

### *7.3 Protestant Hostility and Catholic Resistance*

In the Midlands, as in other areas of England, an attitude of religious tolerance seems to have been preferred as the means of ensuring peaceful co-habitation between Catholic and Protestant neighbours, though this was unlikely a conscious decision. Rather Catholics may have been viewed primarily as neighbours with unfortunate habits. This striving for tranquillity was hindered

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>57</sup> Questier, *Catholicism and Community*, pp. 19-20.

more frequently from the late 1570s by complex feelings of mistrust and wariness towards the Catholics on account of heightened defensiveness from the national government, when toleration gave way to persecution. The Catholic communities of the Midlands and England were linked with the spread of Pius V's bull of excommunication in 1570, with the arrival of the Jesuits in 1580, with the Spanish Armada in 1588 and the potential threat that fleet brought, and finally with the Gunpowder Plot of 1605.<sup>58</sup> As a result, anti-Catholic enterprise often occurred simultaneously with Catholic domestic or foreign plots and schemes. The developments corresponded with reactions that were not coincidental.<sup>59</sup> An iron fist was never the queen's favourite mode of rule, and earlier plots, such as the Ridolfi plot, had shown that she was not willing to be unfair.<sup>60</sup> But she was also capable of being unforgiving, when the situation arose. Elizabeth herself had been in fear of her life on several occasions, once because of her role as an ignorant pawn in a plot to put herself on the throne during the reign of Mary Tudor, an event that gravely affected her.<sup>61</sup> Obvious defiance to her authority and open recusancy could not be ignored by the national government, but there was a certain amount of indifference to those who merely clung to simple conservative leanings.<sup>62</sup> Elevated threats, however, from the pope, Philip

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<sup>58</sup> Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, p. 65.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. p. 136.

<sup>60</sup> Francis Edwards, *Plots and Plotters* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), p. 78.

<sup>61</sup> Wallace MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I* (London: Edward Arnold, 1993), pp. 18-19; Lacey Baldwin Smith, *Elizabeth Tudor: Portrait of a Queen* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1975), pp. 50-52; David Starkey, *Elizabeth: Apprenticeship* (London: Vintage, 2001), pp. 143-145. Smith wrote that Elizabeth's entrance into the Tower was an integral element of 'Gloriana's' hagiography.

<sup>62</sup> David M. Loades, *Elizabeth I: A Life* (New York: Hambledon and London, 2003), p. 138.

of Spain and the forces that flocked to Mary Stuart required the Privy Council to take defensive action.

Protestantism was a minority movement when Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558, but it is clear that the majority of people were prepared to accept church reforms.<sup>63</sup> While the Recusant Rolls record those who could, in theory, afford to pay the fine for recusancy (this seems to be the case, as few or no labourers are recorded in the Rolls for the Midland counties), imprisonment was used for recusants of all social classes, as well as the Catholic clergy. There has been some statistical research on imprisoned recusants (especially the clergy) for England as a whole, but it is still difficult to understand the situation of the imprisoned laity within the counties.<sup>64</sup> The circumstances become even more difficult to gauge on a local level, such as the Midlands, especially outside the gentry and clergy. There are dozens of lists in the State Papers naming prisoners who were held on account of religion. The majority of these prisons were located in London – Newgate, the Marshalsea, the Clink, the Tower – and it is known that Midland men and women were at times transported down to London for their incarceration, such as Thomas Tresham, Lord Vaux and William Catesby, none of whom died in prison, and Edward Arden and John Somerville were incarcerated at the Tower of London, leading up to their deaths.<sup>65</sup>

The reasons for imprisonment were enumerated in 1559 with the Religious Settlement, and from that year new offences were regularly added. Unlike execution, which was based on the grounds of treason, imprisonment for

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<sup>63</sup> Penry Williams, *The Later Tudors: England 1547-1603* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 465.

<sup>64</sup> Patrick McGrath and Joy Rowe, 'The Imprisonment of Catholics for Religion under Elizabeth I', *Recusant History* 20 (1991), p. 414.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 420.

religion was sanctioned and practiced. A Catholic could be committed to gaol for aiding a seminary priest or having a priest say mass or deliver sacraments, for not attending regular Sunday service, for speaking against the English church, or for possessing seditious books.<sup>66</sup> Catholic prisoners could be released from prison at any time if they repudiated their faith and agreed to conform, though it seems that surprisingly few did so.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps the most famous early offenders of this legislation were the Midlands men Lord Vaux, Sir Thomas Tresham, and Sir Robert Catesby, who were imprisoned at the Fleet in London in 1581 after being convicted of harbouring and associating with the Jesuit Edmund Campion, who was to be executed in the same year.<sup>68</sup>

Religious intolerance seems to have manifested itself in both official and unofficial methods. Distrust of those who moved between towns, counties or even to the continent seems to have had a religious tint to it; missionary priests were frequently on the move, and parishioners at times practised mobility as a way around attending reformed services. Walsham has found that when anti-Catholic factions arose, it was often geared at gentry families that owned more than one estate, or whose household was on the edge of a town or village.<sup>69</sup> In Warwickshire, recusants managed to remain obstinate through these means; some moved between parishes, counties or even abroad to avoid the commissioners and the justices of the peace. Henry and Judith Freeman of Tamworth, for example, fled to Ireland, while Philadelphia Ford of Polesworth

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* p. 420.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* p. 432.

<sup>68</sup> APC, XIII, p. 176.

<sup>69</sup> Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, p. 142.

fled to Staffordshire.<sup>70</sup> If one was on the outskirts of society physically, it may not have been a leap to put them on the outskirts of the law.<sup>71</sup>

It is interesting to note areas of prominent Puritanism within the Midland counties; Coventry had been a locality for Protestant non-conformists early on in the Reformation, and Northampton was at the forefront of the movement. The renowned order of Northampton of 1571, a taste for prophysying, and a number of prominent Puritan preachers cultivated a culture of radical reform in the town in the 1570s. In 1588, Martin Marprelate opposed Bishop Richard Howland, citing that the Puritan preacher Percival Wilburn had done much to progress Puritanism in the areas, in the 1570s.<sup>72</sup> Civility was at times more strained between Puritan and Catholic neighbours than Protestant and Catholic. Rumours spread in 1605 that local Catholics in Northampton, with the encouragement and assistance of the conforming clergy, had planned to mark the doors of Puritan homes, and massacre those within.<sup>73</sup>

In the mid-1580s an act of passive-aggressive action that had been intended to persuade the queen and Council to allow a measure of toleration toward the Catholic community backfired. On 19 December 1584, parliament left for Christmas recess, but not before passing a bill proposing that the act of a priest being ordained on the Continent and returning to England was in itself an act of treason. This was bad news for the Catholic gentry, and a document entitled 'Reasons for and against a petition to the Queen', most likely written by

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<sup>70</sup> SP 12/243, f.202, 'A book containing the second certificates of the Commissioners for the county of Warwick to the Council', November 1592.

<sup>71</sup> For other examples of Midland Catholics moving between parishes and counties, see chapter 2 of this dissertation.

<sup>72</sup> Andrew Chambers, 'Reading Libels in Early Seventeenth Century Northamptonshire', in Lewycky and Morton (eds.), *Getting Along?*, p. 115.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, p. 116.

Thomas Tresham, was endorsed by himself and various other Midlands Catholics, including Lord Vaux, Sir John Arundell, and the prominent layman from Rowington, Warwickshire, William Skinner. It seems that the endorsers had high hopes that the queen would offer Catholics acceptance and freedom of conscience, if only they were willing to ask for it.<sup>74</sup> The proposal was for a specific number of churches in every county and town to be allotted to those who preferred Catholic worship, and for anti-Catholic legislation to be dropped. The endorsers stated that they would attend the services of learned Protestant ministers, provided they could convince the Catholics it was no sin to do so (although this promise must be taken with a grain of salt, as there is no reason to believe the Catholic community would accept this kind of argument). As a token of their appreciation for this tolerance, each Catholic would pay a subsidy to the queen.<sup>75</sup> This tells us that Midland Catholics made a conscious decision not to conform to the Religious Settlement, but still that they saw themselves as able to act loyally to the queen; they did not question her right to rule, but also believed in their own religious rights, as they were in the sixteenth century, demonstrating an awareness of the religious situation both locally and nationally.

This debate was in progress in the early months of 1585, and it was then that the Catholics delivered their petition. The manner in which it was delivered was unorthodox; Richard Shelley, a Catholic gentleman from Sussex, passed it by hand to the queen, while she was taking a stroll in a garden at Greenwich

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<sup>74</sup> J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1984). p. 148. The primary documentation of this case is held in the State Papers, SP 12/167, f.54, Job Throckmorton to Ralph Warcupp, 13 January 1584.

<sup>75</sup> Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People*, p. 148; Godfrey Anstruther, *Vaux of Harrowden: A Recusant Family* (Monmouthshire: R.H. Johns, 1953), p. 154.

Palace.<sup>76</sup> Ignoring the normal hierarchy of communication by bypassing the Privy Council could not have helped the Catholic cause. Richard Shelley was arrested for his boldness, interrogated in the Marshalsea and appears to have died there the following year.<sup>77</sup> The bill that had sparked this petition received the Royal Assent on 29 March 1584; it is known as the 'Act against Jesuits, seminary priests and other such disobedient persons'.<sup>78</sup> Thereafter all priests ordained on the Continent since the queen's accession and living in England were guilty of high treason, regardless of proof of treasonous intentions or actions.

It seems that the endorsers of the Midlands petition doubted that their petition would find approval with the queen and Council; the author admitted there was 'no liklyhood of good successe'. It may be that the petition was rather to counter the anti-Catholic sentiments that sprung from the parliament of late 1584; it was an explanation of why Catholics were resisting the hostility, and why they were entitled to do so.<sup>79</sup> Regardless of their intentions, from the viewpoint of the queen and Council, the Catholics were asking the impossible. Toleration from the national perspective was unfeasible because of the influences of foreign forces, and it was naïve for the Catholics even to have expected it.<sup>80</sup> Yet they did expect it, which tells us that Midland Catholics at least had hopes that toleration was possible in their region, and moreover they believed that loyalty to the queen gave them liberty to be Catholic. Religious

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<sup>76</sup> Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People*, p. 148.

<sup>77</sup> Anstruther, *Vaux of Harrowden*, p. 157.

<sup>78</sup> 27 Eliz. c.2.

<sup>79</sup> H.M.C, *Var. Coll. III*, 35; Sandeep Kaushik, 'Resistance, Loyalty and Recusant Politics: Sir Thomas Tresham and the Elizabethan State', *Midland History* 21 (1996), p. 57.

<sup>80</sup> Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People*, p. 149.



tolerance had rarely, if ever, been a priority in Europe; however, if the Catholic community had been naïve in expecting that they would be granted toleration, the queen and Council were also naïve in believing that the Catholics would simply accept their dismissal and conform. The harsh disregard on the side of the government added fuel to the fire of Catholics who were courting militancy.<sup>81</sup> The Catholic gentry of the Midlands such as the Throckmortons, Treshams, Catesbys and Vauxs, acted as a link to the conservative past, although the post-Reformation community was decidedly different in practice compared with its medieval counterpart. Many Midland Catholic gentry such as Sir Thomas Tresham were not uncomfortable with acts of political resistance, either defensive or offensive.<sup>82</sup>

No analysis of Catholic resistance would be complete without the example of Sir Thomas Tresham, of Rushton, Northamptonshire. He was no stranger to political resistance, though his methodology was subtle and mild. We know much about Tresham; his local government positions leading up to his career in recusancy, followed by his status as a powerful Catholic figure from the 1580s through to his death in September 1605 meant that much of his life is well documented.<sup>83</sup> Tresham left a multitude of family papers and correspondence in draft form, which are now held at the British Library, as well as surviving final copies of posted and received letters. This, added to his famous Star Chamber trial, his long term imprisonments and hefty recusancy fines (all well

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> For a thorough study of how Catholic gentry, specifically Sir Thomas Tresham, resisted the political regime both defensively and offensively, see Kaushik, 'Resistance, Loyalty and Recusant Politics', pp. 37-72.

<sup>83</sup> Tresham died two months before the Gunpowder Plot was discovered on 5 November, 1605. The plot involved much of Tresham's kinship and social network, including his son, Francis.

documented), set him apart from the majority of Elizabethan Catholics, of whom we know so little. Tresham was, however, a typical Elizabethan gentlemen in other respects; he held an uncompromising belief in the necessity of constancy to uphold social traditions.<sup>84</sup> He fitted the mould of what many historians would like to think of as the typical loyal recusant, that oxymoronic character that appeals to the modern researcher because he seems to be opposing something that we too would oppose – religious oppression. But Tresham's, and likely many other Elizabethan Catholics', insistence on loyalty to the state has been suggested to be more complex than it seems on the surface. The Elizabethan government was patently a Protestant regime, and therefore any self-conscious decision to go against the religious grain, even with the protestations of loyalty, was in itself a subtle act of resistance, because religious conformity was an act of loyalty to the queen.<sup>85</sup>

It may be because of this nuance that Catholics of varying degrees moved in and out of conformity frequently and with relative ease. Tresham himself had conformed to the reformed church until 1580, which is quite late considering his ostentatious recusant career over the next quarter century. His provisional conformity was both minimal and shallow, but it allowed him to serve in local government positions, and he was knighted for his service in 1577. While Anstruther has argued that Tresham had never accepted any reformed teaching, he must have practised a modicum of public conformity in order to keep his local offices.<sup>86</sup> His early conservatism, even through the cloak of conformity, is evident, however. In the late 1560s he kept as his children's tutor Thomas Bramson, a

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<sup>84</sup> Kaushik, 'Resistance, Loyalty and Recusant Politics', p. 39.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>86</sup> Anstruther, *Vaux of Harrowden*, pp.95-96.

future seminary priest. Pairing this with his compliance with the Religious Settlement suggests that Tresham benefited from the practice of church papism.<sup>87</sup> It was not to last. Robert Persons who was active in the Midlands in the early 1580s claimed Tresham to be one of the first conservatives he converted to full-scale recusancy.<sup>88</sup> His new religious perspective put Tresham at complete odds with the regime, considering the increasing penalties and restrictions being put into practice.<sup>89</sup>

While the Elizabethan government had been willing to accept, or at least overlook, church papism, recusancy was another matter entirely. This would not have been lost on the Catholic community, and they would have been aware that any lapse into recusancy was an act of resistance to the regime. Historians have traced the initial push to recusancy to the exiled clergy in 1566.<sup>90</sup> At first this may seem an unusual time for such a promotion; three years from the Northern Rising of 1569 and the subsequent Papal Bull excommunicating the queen in 1570, the community was experiencing its most peaceful decade. These two acts mark the end of any kind of acceptance and benevolence offered towards Catholics. Numbers of conservatives began to fall with the increasing penalties towards Catholics, but at the same time recusancy rates began to grow, which

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<sup>87</sup> Christopher Haigh, 'The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation' *Past and Present* (1981) 93, p. 55; Alan Dures, *English Catholicism, 1558-1642: Continuity and Change* (London: Longman, 1983), pp. 94-95.

<sup>88</sup> Robert Persons, 'Memoirs', in J.H. Pollen (ed.), *Miscellanea II* (Catholic Record Society, 1096), pp. 27, 178.

<sup>89</sup> Kaushik, 'Resistance, Loyalty and Recusant Politics', p. 40.

<sup>90</sup> A.L. Rowse, *The England of Elizabeth: The Structure of Society* (London: Macmillan, 1950), pp. 439-443; Christopher Haigh, *Elizabeth I* (London: Longman, 1998), pp. 36-38; Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1993), pp. 13-14; Peter Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise: The Political Thought of the Elizabethan Catholics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 83-85.

only caused penalties to be heightened once more. The majority of the Catholic laity rarely felt the brute force of these penalties; they were imposed for the most part on noteworthy persons, except in times of domestic crisis or threat.<sup>91</sup> Even so, the force of the psychological consequence of national persecution was strong, as is evident from the amount of contemporary Catholic literature on oppression.<sup>92</sup>

Any attempt to fortify Catholicism against the state was seditious at best in the eyes of the officials such as Lord Burghley, but at worst coming dangerously close to treason. Acts meant to strengthen Catholicism within England were not necessarily a direct challenge to Elizabeth and her authority to reign, but they were suggesting a hope of reversing the penal laws, either in her own reign, or under the future monarch.<sup>93</sup> Sandeep Kaushik has argued that the actions of Catholics such as Thomas Tresham should be regarded as politically resistant, even though he neither acted with nor promoted violence.<sup>94</sup> Kaushik differentiates between defensive resistance (through networks of patronage and marriage, and conservation of Catholic 'things' and buildings) and offensive resistance (aiding missionary priests, supporting Catholic causes in England and abroad). Though both could be practised without the use of violence, there is a marked escalation between defensive and offensive resistance. Catholics of the Midlands believed strongly in Catholic families uniting with one another to

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<sup>91</sup> Kaushik, p. 41.

<sup>92</sup> Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, pp. 36-39; Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise*, pp. 47-48, 83-85; J.E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments, 1584-1601* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1957), pp. 280-297; Wallace MacCaffrey, *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969), pp. 221-246; Kaushik, 'Resistance, Loyalty and Recusant Politics', p. 41.

<sup>93</sup> Kaushik, 'Resistance, Loyalty and Recusant Politics', p. 41.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

strengthen their cause. These bonds of marriage and kinship were consequential and enduring. For example, Tresham's tempestuous relationship with his brother-in-law Lord Vaux's children never resulted in him renouncing his friendship with the baron, and the ties linking the family lasted after Vaux's death.<sup>95</sup> Tresham's model of resistance began to create a different standard of behaviour that was applicable to the whole Catholic community.<sup>96</sup> This behaviour was not necessarily 'new', but rooted in medieval notions of honour, family and the household.

This concept of community was a combination of traditional views on the social pecking order that would have been common among the Elizabethan elite, merged with recently developed interpretations on life as the persecuted few. Put into practice, gentry Catholics used their local nobility to patronise other Catholics. Often this was confined to a town, county or region, but the scope was enlarged at times too. For example, Tresham took in as a kind of ward a man named Thomas Colwell, who was violently forced from his home in Kent on account of his recusancy. He took up residence in Tresham's estate at Rushton in Northamptonshire, in a building where four missionary priests lived. This protection of fellow Catholics is also evidence of resistance, since Colwell, as a recusant, was acting outside the law. This act of conservation through shielding Colwell and his family was eventually noticed by authorities, and in 1587 Colwell was sent to the Fleet Prison, though the charges against him are unclear.<sup>97</sup>

Research has also shown that when local disputes arose, Catholics and Protestants were likely to side against one another, even if the quarrel was non-

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>97</sup> Anstruther, *Vaux of Harrowden*, pp. 87-90.

religious in origin.<sup>98</sup> This differs from the previous argument that Catholics and Protestants could retain a cordial relationship at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, which demonstrates a shift in religious tensions. Because of this divide, various economic classes of Catholics may have associated with each other in ways that would have been alien in pre-Reformation England. The network of Midland Catholics provided a formidable instrument of political resistance, as networking in itself was an act of defensive resistance. Tresham was head of this network, certainly for Northamptonshire, but the strategic alliances made from his children's marriages to other Catholic families across the Midlands and beyond, paired with his penchant to lead and his personality to meddle in the affairs of his co-religionists, suggests that he was a leading contender for the region as a whole. For example, Thomas Tresham's son, Francis, married Anne Tufton of Kent, and his daughter Mary married Thomas Brudenell of Huntingdonshire and Northamptonshire.

Tresham's showy and pretentious architectural style could not have eased tensions among his Protestant neighbours. Building works with overtly Catholic religious symbolism which publically demonstrated his faith was another act of resistance – this time offensive rather than defensive. Tresham's manner in which he aggressively managed his land had been an issue of contention for years among his neighbours – his messy papers and draft letters held in the British Library make this clear; they suggest Tresham had few interests outside his land and building projects. The land issue, however, never came to a head until near the end of his life, and then again after his death. In 1603, an anti-

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<sup>98</sup> William Joseph Sheils, *The Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough, 1558-1610* (Northampton: Northamptonshire Record Society, 1979), pp. 114-115.

enclosure riot broke out in Rockingham Forest, where Tresham was the keeper of the forest, on which a parish of a large community of Puritans bordered. Near to the parish was the construction of Tresham's New Building, where the family's servants were said to hear Mass. The anti-enclosure riot was directed at Tresham, and it is possible that difference in religion had increased the tension of this agrarian issue. Again in 1607, two years after Tresham's death, the Midland Revolt began in Northamptonshire. Riots took place in four Northamptonshire communities, three of which had Tresham family enclosures. Again, it seems clear that the motive behind the riots was Tresham's vigorous land policies, but his family's religious fanaticism could not have won him any sympathy among the conforming community.<sup>99</sup>

Forging links with local Catholics and creating and maintaining a network was one way in which Midland Catholics acted to preserve their faith and identity, but this was not enough to sustain themselves against persecution. The community needed Catholic clergy to nourish their faith and to provide sacraments. From the arrival of seminary priests in 1574 and Jesuits in 1580, the efforts of the missionary clergy were supported and encouraged by the Catholic gentry. It was the elite who had the resources to support the clergy; they required a livelihood as well as protection. Through the network, however, non-gentry Catholics were able to benefit from clerical influence.<sup>100</sup> The brothers Thomas and Rees Moore, described as 'pore men but very dangerous', travelled the Midlands from Leicestershire to Herefordshire, celebrating Mass at Catholic

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<sup>99</sup> Roger B. Manning, *Village Revolts: Social Protest and Popular Disturbances in England, 1509-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 229-242; Kaushik, 'Resistance, Loyalty and Recusant Politics', p. 49.

<sup>100</sup> See chapter 3 of this dissertation.

houses, hearing confessions, shriving and absolving Catholics as well as fasting with them.<sup>101</sup>

These are clearly acts of resistance against anti-Catholic policies, so we must question the motives behind the Catholic Midlands trend to profess loyalty to the queen and her government. The answers are quite complex – it cannot be argued that the declaration of loyalty paired with recusancy was deceitful or a falsehood. What seems to have happened was the adaptation of a theory that at the same time warranted the recusant's refusal to act according to the state laws if his or her conscience was assaulted by that act, but still agreed that the state had the legitimate jurisdiction to impose the penal laws of the nation, which they refused to ascribe to.<sup>102</sup> Tresham himself contended this opinion during his trial in the Star Chamber for harbouring the Jesuit Edmund Campion. He answered, when asked if he knew the law:

I know yt right well, and holde yt a strickt commaundement for me dutifully to obeye and religiouslye to observe, yet your lordship knoweth that some thinges be proper to God, other to Cesar, which we may not confounde; but in this, yt being no more temporall demaunde but a matter in conscience, and thereby concerneth my soule, I am to have such special regarde hereto in this my othe before your honors, as I may be abled to make my accompt before the majestie of almightie God at the dreadful daie of judgement.<sup>103</sup>

It is a remarkable belief – all the while actively resisting the state, but professing genuine loyalty to the persecuting body. In the case of Tresham, this claim only angered the Court of Star Chamber. On the one hand, Tresham stressed that he was 'redie nowe to depose as much as I then offered...to

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<sup>101</sup> SP 12/156, f.46, Bishop Whitgyft to Walsingham, 24 December 1582.

<sup>102</sup> Kaushik, 'Resistance, Loyalty and Recusant Politics', p. 54.

<sup>103</sup> John Bruce, 'Observations upon certain Proceedings in the Star-chamber against Lord Vaux, Sir Thomas Tresham, Sir William Catesby, and others, for refusing to swear that they had not harboured Campion the Jesuit', *Archeologia* 30 (1844), p. 92.



alleageance & state', but with the exception of 'not to accuse any catholique in cases of conscience onlie w[hich] I still affyrme.'<sup>104</sup> This was upsetting to the court and in turn the Privy Council because Tresham's argument was well debated and thoroughly convincing. Lord Hudson passed the verdict at the trial, and said that Tresham had 'studied and premeditated his argument forth of the scripture...to premonish all catholiques by his example how to answere and how to behave themselves in lyke cases'.<sup>105</sup> It was feared, therefore, that other Catholics who found themselves in a similar position could use the same argument. In this way, Tresham had once again taken an offensive stance against the state.

Arguments such as these were subtle, but they were no less obvious to the Council than outright attacks on the state and its legitimacy to impose religious laws.<sup>106</sup> Nor could it have been lost on anyone involved or interested, that Tresham was taking advantage of one of the main teachings of Protestantism in his arguments, which included the individual's right to pursue a relationship with the divine as personal to one's own conscience. Tresham's defence notes remain in the British Library, and he made use of quotations from Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, hardly Catholic literature.<sup>107</sup> This idea of conscience, like loyalty, is more complex than it may seem at the outset. To Burghley, as is clear in his *Execution of Justice in England*, written in 1583 after the execution of Campion, a conscience was a purely subjective matter – one that did not necessarily find fault in physical acts. Therefore, according to those adhering to

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<sup>104</sup> BL, Harleian MS 849, f.46v-47r.

<sup>105</sup> Bruce, 'Proceedings in the Star Chamber', p. 106.

<sup>106</sup> Kaushik, 'Resistance, Loyalty and Recusant Politics', p. 56.

<sup>107</sup> BL Add. MS 39830, f. 49-53.

this theory, a Catholic could, in good conscience, go to reformed services while all the while remaining a good Catholic.<sup>108</sup> Tresham disagreed with this, and made his point clear. It was, however, an issue that was continually debated among the community and clergy. In Warwickshire, Lady Margery Throckmorton, mother of the recently executed Francis, stressed that priests and Catholics in trouble with the law ought to promise conformity with no intention of keeping up the pledge. Such an oath, when said to someone erring in religion themselves, was of no consequence and therefore should not weigh on a Catholic's conscience. During an interrogation, an examinee claimed she heard Lady Throckmorton say, 'for that our englishe bookes where vpon they should be sworne, were but the bookes of hereticques & of no force before god'.<sup>109</sup> Lady Throckmorton's opinion was not universally acknowledged among Midland Catholics. The missionary clergy and especially the exiled clergy stressed the sinfulness of attending reformed service, and many took to recusancy only after the influx of seminary priests and Jesuits.<sup>110</sup>

The harsh penalties imposed upon Catholics from the 1580s onwards did not discourage some members of the community from harbouring hope that religious tolerance would someday be granted. For these Catholics, it was the death of Elizabeth that they awaited, expecting that James VI of Scotland, as the son of Mary Stuart, once the English Catholic community's best hope for a reconversion to Catholicism, would be lenient towards their faith. Many Midland Catholic gentry made a point to support the new king publically, shortly after the

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<sup>108</sup> William Cecil, *The Execution of Justice in England* (London, 1583), f. B1v.

<sup>109</sup> SP 12/173/1, f.40, Sir Hugh Cholmondeley and others to Walsingham, 25 September 1584.

<sup>110</sup> Walsham, *Church Papists*, p. 50.

death of Elizabeth in March 1603. Tresham's rather embarrassing display of loyalty to the first Stuart king of England has been well documented.<sup>111</sup> In London, Francis and Lewis Tresham along with their brother-in-law Lord Monteagle secured the Tower of London for the new king. As James travelled through Northamptonshire on the way to his coronation, he was welcomed by the sheriff, well-known church papist Sir George Shirley, and other leading Catholic gentry, Lord Wintour, Lord Mordent and Viscount Montague.<sup>112</sup>

Most English Catholics supported James' claim to the crown, though estimates of the numbers of Catholics at this time are between one and two per cent of the population, plus the innumerable church papists within the country.<sup>113</sup> Catholics of the new regime initially expected tolerance, a notion they harboured from the belief that their support of the succession right of Mary Stuart to be the commencement of their harsh treatment under Elizabeth. By supporting the Scots Queen, they were indirectly supporting her son, their new king.<sup>114</sup> But James was both Elizabeth's successor to the Protestants and Mary Stuart's successor for the Catholics – it would have been impossible to please both religious camps.<sup>115</sup> The elation of the Catholic community lasted only one year, however – Jesuits were comparing James unfavourably to Elizabeth by 1604 because he had not enacted the tolerance to Catholics he had promised.<sup>116</sup> The result was one last-ditch attempt to gain attention and a place within the national community and what could be considered the last Elizabethan plot – the

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<sup>111</sup> Kaushik, 'Resistance, Loyalty and Recusant Politics', pp. 60-61.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Questier, 'Elizabeth and the Catholics', p. 86-87.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

Gunpowder Plot of 1605, which received support from Midland Catholics such as Francis Tresham of Northamptonshire, Robert Catesby and John Grant of Warwickshire, Robert Keyes of Derbyshire, Robert and Thomas Wintour of Worcestershire and Everard Digby of Leicestershire.

Examples of offensive resistance can be found among Midland Catholics. Thomas Tresham, even while imprisoned, corresponded frequently with Bernardino de Mendoza, the Spanish Ambassador (1578-1584).<sup>117</sup> Writing to Philip II in 1581 (while Tresham was imprisoned for harbouring Campion), Mendoza suggests that a plan to send Jesuits into Scotland was Tresham's idea.<sup>118</sup> Additionally, in a letter to Lord Burghley, Tresham replied to the suggestion that he ought to stick to scripture:

'Also I must confess w[ith] yo[ur] honor y[t] the catholique faith is not limited to one onely place: But is a *solis ortu usque as occasum: et in omnem terram exivit sonus eorum*. Nether do I for my parte...do allow com[m]andements in cases of religion and conscience, w[hich] is not warranted by gods worde.'<sup>119</sup>

Tresham had asked Burghley to:

'be a means to restore mee to her ma[jesties] gratius fauor...I ever have honoured and reverenced aboue all earthly creatures, and whom I willingly neuer haue intention to offende ether in deede, worde of thought: confessing y[t] in matters if religion and for conscience onely, I haue not fully conformed my self to some of her ma[jesties] proceedings.'<sup>120</sup>

In June 1604 Richard and Margery Fosbrooke of Cranford St Andrews in Northamptonshire, were taken to the Court of Star Chamber for hindering the parson, Francis Austin, from conducting service and reading the articles of

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<sup>117</sup> Mendoza was expelled from England for his involvement in the Parry Plot.

<sup>118</sup> CSPD 1580-1586, 'Bernardino de Mendoza to the King of Spain', 11 December 1581, p. 604.

<sup>119</sup> Hatfield MSS vol 162, no 70. 22 September 1582. 'Sir Thomas Tresham to [Lord Burghley?].

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

religion in his church. Margery claimed that the complaint against her and her husband was 'verie vncertainlie vntrue and ynsufficient' in law. It was started more 'of malice and evnie .... To vexe this defendant'.<sup>121</sup> She claimed the church was never widely attended, and some men of the parish took control of the church with weapons – bows, swords, pike forks, pistols, and other offensive weapons. The whole point of this was to keep the parson away from the church for his actual induction, as the Bishop of Peterborough had recently appointed him. These men remained in the church and churchyard for sixteen days, not allowing the parson or any other 'lawfull minister' entrance on Sundays and other days set aside for worship. Eventually the parson was given possession of the church by Richard Austen, clerk. The Star Chamber clerk wrote:

So yt was most gracious Sovereinge [th]at in the tyme of Com[m]on prayer & preaching you[r] subiect being in the pullpitt in the aforesaid church of Cranford St Andrews & beginning to read the aforesaid Articles the aforesaid Richard Folbrooke John Folbrooke iunior[r] John Ball William Leeke and Robart Gylbre by the Consent procurement & advise of John Folbrooke the elder and Thomas Baxter aforesaid [th]at daye and yeare aforesaid the pulpit in the said Church did enter and then and there the booke of articles aforesaid in Contempt of all religion & yo[re] Ma[jes]ties laws w[ith] great violence wrested and tooke a waye out of [th]e hands of yo[re] subiect while he was reading thereof and the same daye and yeare when they p[re]ceived [th]at yo[re] subiect had another booke of articles and did draw yt forth to read and publish as was his dutyeso to doo all the p[er]sons aforesaid in the presence of the whole Congregacon did w[ith] mayne force and w[ith] offensiue weapons beate wounde hurt and draw yo[re] subiect out of [th]e sayd pulpit & Church at the tyme of evening prayer not p[er]mitting or suffering him to make an End of [th]e said articles Com[m]on prayers or preaching to [th]e great offence of Almighty god & vtter disgrace and discredit of you[r] poore subiect his function and calling and to the incouragement of other to doo [th]e like.<sup>122</sup>

This is an unusual example that shows how far things had moved by 1604.

The resistance practised by the Catholic community of the Midlands was not

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<sup>121</sup> STAC 8/42/6

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

solely theoretical, as historians have often argued.<sup>123</sup> Nor was it highly violent, as the authorities of the period stressed in polemical and propagandist writings, aimed toward the Protestant community in an attempt to segregate the Catholics from wholesome society, making them into a distrusted group. There was an area of resistance based between passive resistance and violent resistance. This zone of resistance, where many Catholics seem to have been centred, was where the community strove to strengthen itself, to thrive and not just survive, all the while promising loyalty to the queen and state. As we have seen, this was at times simply rhetoric, but it does seem clear that there was a recognisable distinction between loyalty to the state and acceptance of the policies that were enforced.<sup>124</sup> Thomas Tresham was believed to be the leader in an attempted Protestant purge in Northamptonshire in the months leading up to the Gunpowder Plot, during which Protestant houses were marked with a cross.<sup>125</sup> This was perhaps Tresham's last stand, as he died soon thereafter.

#### *7.4 Conclusion*

The anti-Catholic laws imposed by Elizabeth I and her Privy Council took time to be accepted and implemented, and considering that Catholicism and recusancy were never eradicated before the emancipation movements of the nineteenth century, these penal laws were not successful. Catholic and Protestant communities were for much of the time integrated with one another, and therefore the study of 'Catholic' history can be problematic. Midlands Catholic

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<sup>123</sup> For example, Patrick Collinson, 'The Monarchial Republic of Queen Elizabeth I' (Manchester: John Rylands University Library, 1987), p. 408.

<sup>124</sup> Kaushik, 'Resistance and Loyalty', p. 64.

<sup>125</sup> SP 14/12, f.214, John Lambe to Dr Neile, 26 February 1605.

communities were rarely in hiding, but rather were a part of the wider society. At times during Elizabeth's reign the Catholic communities , including those of the Midlands, were 'tolerated', though toleration in the sixteenth century had a different meaning than it does today, and did not necessarily mean that Catholics were welcome members of the parish. On account of this, debates about outward conformity were made throughout Elizabeth's reign, with many Catholics choosing to attend reformed services to avoid social penalties and fines. Again, we should not confuse conformity with loyalty to the crown, as Catholics could show resistance to the state in various ways. It is important not to generalise Midlands Catholics as members of only one community, or as fundamentally Catholic as the historiographical orthodoxy states. Midlands Catholic communities were fluid and very adaptable, and their members associated and identified with a variety of religious, social, local, political and economic communities.

## 8. Enduring Catholic Memory

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The 'clash' with the state and with Protestants more generally that Elizabethan Catholics witnessed resonated for generations, and the 'memory' of this period was not quickly forgotten. As early as the sixteenth century, English government propaganda made intentional use of national memory to advance the wants and needs of church and state. The seventeenth century saw an intensified English drive in the understanding, commemoration and control of past events that impacted on contemporary national memory. To echo David Cressy,

England's past became an issue in England's present to a degree unknown in early modern Christendom. A deliberately cultivated vision of the past was incorporated into the English calendar, reiterated in sermons, reviewed in almanacs, and given physical form by memorials and monuments.<sup>1</sup>

This occurrence seems to have been initiated directly by the ruling and religious elite, though it soon filtered down to the masses, who developed their own systems of remembrance, with their own 'providences, heroes, martyrs and shrines.'<sup>2</sup> In this way, popular memorialisation helped to both unite and divide early modern England, as we know so well it continues to do in the twenty-first century.

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<sup>1</sup> David Cressy, 'National Memory in Early Modern England', in John R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



Scholars researching myth and legend have explained that societies develop repetitive chronicles and illustrative models of history that repeatedly emerge when people attempt to organize and display their society. And yet narrative alone does not suffice for such myths and legends to become popular and persist. Myths and legends persist in the mind when the narrative is structured within an historical context, with material and documentary substance to back it up, such as the myths and legends surrounding the Spanish Armada and the Gunpowder Plot, and comparing Elizabeth herself to Biblical women such as Deborah.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, from a Catholic perspective, it was possible to construct an explanatory framework for recusancy. In such accounts, the history of post-Reformation Catholicism in England has been divided into three broad phases: a period of oppression and persecution, especially after c. 1580; a time of legal restraint but no severe physical persecution between 1680 and 1829 (the final execution for religious reasons was in 1681, of the priest Oliver Plunket); and then the age of comparative religious freedom, from Catholic Emancipation in 1829 to the present day.<sup>4</sup>

The religious and political propaganda of early modern England established a Protestant narrative of English history, and supported this state-sponsored narrative through the carefully choreographed use of memory. Significant historic incidents, such as the accession of the Protestant Elizabeth over the Catholic Mary Tudor, the Protestant victory over the Spanish Armada,

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<sup>3</sup> Judith Pollman, 'Of living legends and authentic takes: How to get remembered in Early Modern Europe', in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* XXIII (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 104, 106.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Mullet, 'Preface' in Michael Mullet (ed.), *English Catholic Writings on Religious Controversies 1685-1736* Vol 1 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2006), p. ix.

and the foiling of the Catholic conspired Gunpowder Plot, became monumental events in the formation of an English national identity.<sup>5</sup> These national memories, a collection of occurrences deemed so extraordinary they must have been divinely influenced, provided a potent foundation for English identity. Many of these memories continue to resonate today.<sup>6</sup>

In the seventeenth century, the result of this prejudice against Catholics metamorphosed into anti-popery, which differed somewhat from anti-Catholicism. Popery was all things that good – or Protestant - religion was not; both anti-popery and anti-Catholicism co-existed together, but anti-popery was a more political and far more savage expression of anti-Catholicism, which tended to be more cultural in its content. Peter Lake has argued that anti-popery was entirely illogical, and as such deserves only to be recognised, but not examined or justified.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, Lake identified anti-popery as a tangibly significant precedent of the ingrained resistance and hostility towards Catholics that became fundamental to the intellectual and popular culture of early modern England, and in some cases Europe. To many English Protestants, popery was not only an invalidated religion, it was the antithesis of genuine religion.<sup>8</sup> This idea of anti-popery may have been the seventeenth-century response to recusancy.

Early modern Protestant clerics, beginning with Elizabethan divines and carrying on in the seventeenth century, were eager to demonstrate that popery

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<sup>5</sup> See Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> Cressy, 'National Memory', p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Lake, 'Anti-Popery: The Structure of a Prejudice', in Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (eds.), *The English Civil War* (London: Arnold, 1997), p. 182.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

was fraught with internal inconsistencies. The Elizabethan theologian William Perkins, from Bulkington in Warwickshire, was quick to point out the illogical nature of transubstantiation, as Christ's body was simultaneously held to be in heaven and in the Eucharist. Perkins also challenged the incompatible declaration that men and women were saved by grace and good works together, and that Christ could pardon transgressions that would eventually be punished in purgatory.<sup>9</sup> Catholic memory in England is stigmatised by anti-Catholicism, and as such it is at times difficult to understand how memory has impacted the Catholic community themselves.

The overall reformed attitude towards popery was that it was bound to ceremonial ignorance and obsolete practices and scripture. This outlook provided a convenient stance for Protestantism to display its contrasting ideology, which justified a text-based devotion toward religious knowledge.<sup>10</sup> Along with William Perkins, radical Protestants such as Thomas Scott wrote anti-Catholic pamphlets (such as his own *Vox Populi* of 1646), condemning popery for enjoying wanton faith and doctrine due simply to tradition.<sup>11</sup> Matthew Hutton, before his appointment as Archbishop of York, wrote that 'Custom without truth is but old error'.<sup>12</sup> The nature of anti-popery was ambivalent and functioned at social levels other than the deliberate influence in the religious and political polemics of early modern theologians. To reiterate Peter Lake, 'Arguably the

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<sup>9</sup> William Perkins, *The works of that famous and worthie minister of Christ, in the Universitie of Cambridge, M.W. Perkins : gathered into one volume, and newly corrected according to his owne copies. With distinct chapters, and contents of euery book, and a generall table of the whole* (Cambridge, 1616-1618), p. 72.

<sup>10</sup> Lake, 'Anti-Popery', p. 185.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Hutton, *A Sermon Preached at York before Henry Huntingdon* (London, 1579), fos. 4r-6r.

power of anti-popery as a source of ideological leverage and explanatory power was based on the capacity of the image of popery to express, contain and, to an extent, control the anxieties and tensions at the very center of the experience and outlook of English Protestants.<sup>13</sup> In this way, Protestants were unified by their disdain for popery. Because religious aversion is a powerful propagandist tool, the minority of Protestants at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign had been able to create a metaphor of England as fundamentally Protestant and domestic, since Protestantism's enemy, popery, was foreign.<sup>14</sup> John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* is a case in point. First published in 1563 with four more editions appearing during Elizabeth's reign, this work helped transmit to future generations a Protestant patriotism centered on Elizabeth.

Knowing that the foundations of national memory and identity were built during Elizabeth's reign, it is interesting to ask why these instances lingered in folk memory and reverberated through the centuries, and how the memory of historic events was supported and encouraged. For English Catholics, the Spanish Armada heightened penalties and fears directed against them. The Gunpowder Plot shattered their hope of toleration. They suffered a brutal response throughout the Civil War, and afterwards experienced enduring suspicions. For English Protestants, these historic victories reinforced the belief that an Anglophile God had intervened on their behalf.

John Foxe highlighted the divine intervention of Elizabeth's accession to the English throne in 1558, and Protestant writers frequently stressed that throughout her reign providence favoured the queen. Elizabeth had been chosen

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<sup>13</sup> Lake, 'Anti-Popery', p. 188.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

directly by God as the temporal spiritual leader of the English people, encouraging and reunifying England with the true faith. Foxe was of course reminding readers that providence worked both ways, and could also be a threat to rulers who overstepped their mortal limits, effectively reminding Elizabeth that she was answerable to God for her harsh policies against Puritans, as benefitting from providence suggests an arrangement or covenant with the divine that could be balanced and even rescinded.<sup>15</sup> For example, Cressy has argued that, to the Elizabethans, the victory of the English over the Spanish in 1588 validated the covenant of her accession. Even the remembrance motto used by the English to recall the Spanish Armada bragged that God was on the side of the Protestant English against the Catholic Spanish: 'God blew with His winds, and they were scattered'.<sup>16</sup> England and Elizabeth were triumphant because God was on their side, and the Spanish Armada was quickly set in English memory as a remarkable and meaningful historic event; the event quickly took on mythical characteristics and was considered by the English affirmative evidence of God's approval of the reformed faith.<sup>17</sup> The Puritan theologian Richard Rogers called the divine deliverance over the Spanish, 'As memorable a work of God as ever

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<sup>15</sup> See Thomas S. Freeman, 'Providence and Prescription: The Account of Elizabeth in Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'', in Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (eds.), *The Myth of Elizabeth* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2003), pp. 27-55; Alexandra Walsham, 'A Very Deborah? The Myth of Elizabeth I as a Providential Monarch', *Idem*, pp. 143-168.

<sup>16</sup> Most commemorations of the motto were in Latin, either *Flavit Jehovah et Dissipati Sunt*, using the Hebrew word 'Jehovah', or *Flavit Deus et Dissipati Sunt*, using the Latin term 'Deus'. This is why there are many translation variations for this popular phrase.

<sup>17</sup> Cressy, 'National Memory', p. 63.

was in any my remembrance.’<sup>18</sup> To Rogers, remembering an event such as the Spanish Armada was fundamental to its value as it became an historic episode rather than contemporary event.<sup>19</sup>

The year 1588 was commemorated by succeeding generations as a divinely opportune occurrence, a victory for English Protestantism. The Spanish Armada was celebrated and remembered in sermons and prayers, poems, letters and histories and materially in paintings, tapestries and medals. Elizabethans were keen to recall the event and to give continual thanks. An official Prayer of Thanksgiving vowing eternal appreciation was sent to all English parishes: ‘We never forgetting but bearing in perpetual memory this thy merciful protection and deliverance of us.’<sup>20</sup> Quoting the psalms, the prayer of thanksgiving pronounced that: ‘The works of the Lord are great, and ought to be had in remembrance of them that fear him...for one generation shall praise thy works to another generation, and declare thy power.’<sup>21</sup> The psalms were popularly matched with the commemoration of the Spanish Armada. One book written in 1588 replaced ‘England’ for ‘Israel’ and ‘our queen’ for ‘King David’, deliberately comparing Biblical histories with the English and Elizabethan present.<sup>22</sup> The clergy assured that ‘Continually we may...speak of [the victory] to our children,

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<sup>18</sup> Matthew Spinka and Robert Hastings Nichols (eds.), ‘Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries: By Richard Rogers and Samuel Ward’, in *Studies in Church History* II (London, 1933), p. 81.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80; Cressy, ‘National Memory’, p. 63.

<sup>20</sup> John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1824), vol. 3, pp. 28-29.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>22</sup> *A Psalm and Collect of Thanksgiving, not Unmeet for this Present Time: To be Said or Sung in Churches* (London, 1588); Oliver Pigge, *Meditations Concerning Praiers to Almighty God* (London, 1588), p. 36.

and they to their children's children, so that the memory of thy glorious fact may be continued from generation to generation even for ever'.<sup>23</sup>

In the autumn of 1588, after the crisis was over and the end of the looming threat had sunk in, pamphlets, ballads and sermons of thanksgiving were written. On 7 October 'A Ballad of thankes giving unto God, for his mercy toward hir maiestie begynnyng *Reiocyte England*' was listed at the Stationers. On 3 November 'A ballad of the most happy Victory obtained over the Spaniards and their overthrow in July late 1588' became available. On 21 November 'A newe ballad of England's Joy and delight, in the back Rebound of the Spanyardes spyght', was published. *Elizabetha Triumphans* by James Aske was listed on the Stationers' register on 23 November.<sup>24</sup>

As the victory of the Spanish Armada was not established as a memorial holiday, there was no regular encouragement to commemorate the occasion. The Stuart calendar remembered the anniversaries of days of 'deliverance' such as Elizabeth's accession and the Gunpowder Plot. 1588 and the Spanish Armada were generally included in almanacs, suggesting they were by then considered worthy of remembrance.<sup>25</sup> How Catholics themselves remembered the defeat and aftermath of the Spanish Armada is somewhat more difficult to discern. There is no proof that the Catholic community of the Midlands shared the views of some English Catholics abroad, such as William Allen, who supported the

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<sup>23</sup> Pigge, *Meditations Concerning Praiers to Almighty God*, p. 36.

<sup>24</sup> David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2004), p. 118; Edward Arber (ed.), *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London; 1554-1640* (London. 1875), vol. 2, ff.234, 234v, 236, 237v; James Aske, *Elizabetha Triumphans* (London, 1588).

<sup>25</sup> Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, p. 123.

Spanish fleet.<sup>26</sup> As chapter 4 of this dissertation has demonstrated, Midland Catholics resented their persecution, but they did not deny Elizabeth's right to the throne. Midlands Catholics may have disagreed with the 'anti-Catholicism' that surrounded the national memory of the Spanish Armada, but likely many did not resent its defeat.

Despite the fact that the potential tragedy of the Gunpowder Plot was prevented, the foiled scheme had tragic consequences for the English Catholics who considered themselves faithful to the new Stuart king. This undertaking ensured the Midlands' place in national history as many of the conspirators were connected with the Midlands counties, and plans for the 'Powder Treason' had been completed within a secret network of recusant gentry houses stretching across the Midlands. Eight of the thirteen main conspirators were from the Midlands: Robert Catesby, Thomas Bates and John Grant from Warwickshire; Francis Tresham from Northamptonshire; Robert Keyes from Derbyshire; Robert and Thomas Wintour from Worcestershire; and Everard Digby from Leicestershire. In the early hours of 6 November 1605 Thomas Bates, a servant of Robert Catesby, rode over the moat bridge of Coughton Court, Warwickshire, with the grim news of the foiled plot for the group of Catholics assembled there. Two Jesuits, Henry Garnet and Oswald Tesimond were in residence there, along with Anne Vaux. Catesby and Wright had left London for the Midlands on 4 November, to meet with some of the other conspirators in Warwickshire where Rockwood informed them that Guy Fawkes had been found under the House of Lords keeping watch over the gunpowder. They fled to Holbeche House on the

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<sup>26</sup> Eamon Duffy, 'Allen, William (1532–1594)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/391, accessed 3 April 2015].



border with Staffordshire, where their situation proved no better. The sensibilities of Protestant England were shaken and stunned by the intended Catholic terror that was believed to have been divinely prevented, and for several hundred years English Catholics were restricted by national laws as well as local hostility. The thwarting of this potentially horrific event was quickly commemorated and observed as part of national English selfhood, with the smear of blame transferred to law-abiding English Catholics long after the discovery of the plot, making the Elizabethan endeavor for 'tolerance' inconceivable and paradoxical in light of the early Stuart plot.

Subsequently, 5 November became known as a day to cheerfully observe and remember the defeat of the 'Powder Treason' and popery. Such anti-Catholic views and attitudes retained a high pitch during the seventeenth century. Historically inclined clergy quickly perceived a correlation between the deliverances of the Spanish Armada and the Gunpowder Plot, and the yearly celebration of the failure of the plot produced a convenient event to remember the previous salvation over the Spanish. Commemorations of the Spanish Armada had hitherto been celebrated around the time of Elizabeth's accession day, but subsequently this commemoration was advanced a couple of weeks to coincide with the Gunpowder Plot celebrations.<sup>27</sup> The well-known theologian and author, Michael Sparke, connected the Spanish Armada and the Gunpowder Plot in his 1622 publication *Thankfull Remembrances of Gods Wonderful Deliverances of this Land*.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, p. 124.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

Chronicles, prayers and preaching helped stamp the memory of the Gunpowder Plot into English common awareness. Publications such as Edward Pond's *New Almanacke for this Present Yeare of our Lord 1608* made the Papist plot a 'red-letter day'; in the same year Henry Allyn wrote *Allyns Almanacke, or, a Double diarie & prognostication*, remembering 5 November as the day 'King James persevered'.<sup>29</sup> Pond periodically mentioned the Gunpowder Plot in his calendar for November, heading the months in 1610, 1611 and 1612 with:

The fift of this month is to bee kept holy with praise and thanksgiving to God, in memorial of our great deliuerance from the most detestable and vile treachery of the Papists pretended at the Parliament, foure [fiue, sixe] yeares since.<sup>30</sup>

Almanacs of the 1620s and 1630s regularly listed 5 November as a special anniversary, and it was one of few celebration that remained unchanged throughout successive reigns.<sup>31</sup> Edward Pond was still heading the month of November with the call to remember the conspiracy and give thanks for its deliverance, until his death in 1629, and beyond, with almanacs he had written up to 1640 being published yearly, though by this time remembrance of the plot was limited to 5 November, rather than the entire month.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Edward Pond's *New Almanacke for this Present Yeare of our Lord 1608* (London, 1608), p. 27; Henry Allyn, *Allyns Almanacke, or, a Double diarie & prognostication* (London, 1608).

<sup>30</sup> Edward Pond, *A president for prognosticators. An almanacke for the yeare of Christ 1610. current. Being the second after leap yeare* (London, 1610), p. 27; *A president for prognosticators. An almanacke for the yeare of Christ 1611 current. Being the third after leap yeare* (London, 1611), p. 27; *[An almanack for the] yeare of Christ, since his [circumcision, MDCXII] current. Being bissextill, or leap yeare* (London, 1612).

<sup>31</sup> Richard Allestree, *A New Almanacke and Prognostication for this year of our Lord God* (London, 1628, 1632, 1640).

<sup>32</sup> Edward Pond, *A new prognostication for the yeare of our Lord Christ 1626* (Cambridge, 1626), p. 27; *a new almanacke for the yeare of our Lord Christ 1627, being the third after the leape yeare* (Cambridge, 1629), p. 27; *An almanack for the yeare of our Lord Christ MDCXXXVIII* (London, 1638), p. 27.

Seventeenth-century writers understood the benefit of keeping historical events close in popular memory. Bishop George Carleton's work *Thankfull Remembrance of Gods Mercy* was published in four printings between its first edition in 1624 and 1630. Carleton's book described Elizabeth and James as the Biblical heroes Deborah and Solomon, victorious by divine will against papistry, with the Spanish Armada and the Gunpowder Plot coupled together as examples of God's deliverance and mercy for the English.<sup>33</sup> Samuel Clark wrote in 1657 'a true and full narrative of those two never to be forgotten deliverances, the one from the Spanish Invasion in eighty-eight, the other from the hellish powder plot', which was cheaply published as a history book 'for the information and benefit of each family'. Not insignificantly, Clark's aim was to demonstrate what had already been shown in the publications of the past seventy years, 'the wonderful power and mercy of God to us in this poor nation'. Cressy has argued that Clark's motive was to promote consciousness of England's past as the structure for godliness in the present.<sup>34</sup> Commemorating the past was a manner of worship and praise to God. The Gloucester poet John Taylor remembered the Gunpowder Plot in a poem published in 1630:

Now *treason* plotted in th' infernall *Den*,  
*Hels* mischiefe master peece began to worke,  
 Assisted by vnnaturall *Englishmen*,  
 And *lesuites*, that within this Land did lurke,  
*These would* Saint Peter-to Salt. peeter *turne*,  
 And make our Kingdome caper in the ayre,  
 At one blast, *Prince* and *Peeres* and commons burn;  
 And fill the Land with murder and dispaire,

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<sup>33</sup> George Carleton, *A Thankfull Remembrance of God's Mercy. In an Historical Collection of the great and mercifull Deliverances of the Church and State of England* (London, 1624), p. 216.

<sup>34</sup> Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, p. 128; Samuel Clarke, *A True and Full Narrative of Those two never to be forgotten deliverances: the one from the Spanish invasion in 88. The other from the Hellish Powder Plot* (London, 1671), A3v-A4.

No *treasonere* might be compar'd to this,  
Such an escape the Church had nere before:  
The glory's Gods, the victory is his,  
*Not vnto vs, to him* be praise therefore.  
Our *Church* is his, her foes may vnderstand,  
That he defends her with his mighty hand.<sup>35</sup>

The events constituting the English Protestant narrative fashioned by Elizabethan and Stuart clergymen and government propaganda were themselves remembered at specific and special sites. In London, after 1605 the Houses of Parliament and St Stephen's Chapel became visible reminders of the failed Gunpowder Plot for locals and in Gloucestershire the Upper Lapp-Yate House was remembered as the place where Robert Catesby and accomplices 'first Hatcht' the conspiracy.<sup>36</sup> Common areas of villages, towns and cities became the backdrop for Protestant rituals such as bonfires and bell ringing that were used to commemorate the festivals and anniversaries of contemporary English history, such as the accession of Elizabeth, the victory of the Spanish Armada and the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, together with more minor events such as the victory over the Turks in the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 and the execution of Mary Stuart in 1587.<sup>37</sup> Anti-popery was so well established that Guy Fawkes Day was easily rooted into popular culture. Regardless of the Gunpowder Plot, James I permitted some Catholics authority and influence, for example the Earl of Northampton. In 1616 the aforementioned radical theologian Thomas Scott

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<sup>35</sup> John Taylor, *All the works of John Taylor the Waterpoet* (London, 1630), p. 145.

<sup>36</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity and Memory in Early Modern England and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 526; Bodl., MS Top. Glouc. C. 3, fo. 217r.

<sup>37</sup> Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, p. 90-91.

published poems mocking Northampton's Catholicism.<sup>38</sup> In the poem entitled 'Monarchia', Scott wrote:

O happy are we if we know our good,  
And if our state be rightly vnderstood:  
To liue thus free vnder so blest a King,  
Just Magistrates and Cleargy-men, that sing,  
The songs of Syon in the holy tongue  
Conuerting old men, and informing yong.  
No spirit-tyrant Pope, state-tyrant Turke,  
Can here their bloody ends and proiects worke;  
Eut each in safety may his owne possesse,  
More free then Kings, because our cares belesse.<sup>39</sup>

Pamphleteers such as Scott molded Northampton and other prominent Catholics into the form of ungodly, even treasonous, advisors to King James, and this trickled into common consciousness.<sup>40</sup>

As the seventeenth century unfolded the Gunpowder Plot became more contested territory. While 5 November continued to be remembered in prejudicial terms, some members of the ruling elite under Charles I considered anti-Catholic celebrations offensive while a Catholic, Henrietta Maria, was Queen of England.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, preaching about the deliverance from the Gunpowder Plot on its anniversary, which was popular during James I's reign, became more contentious under Charles I. Archbishop Laud does not seem to have preached on 5 November, and when the anniversary was used in sermons by men such as Jeremy Taylor, emphasis was on treason in general, not about remembrance or Catholics.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Lake, 'Anti-Popery', p. 195.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Scott, *Philomythologie* (London, 1616), p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2-3.

<sup>41</sup> Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, p. 152-153.

<sup>42</sup> Jeremy Taylor, *A Sermon Preached in Saint Maries Church in Oxford Vpon the Anniversary of the 'Gunpowder Treason* (Oxford, 1638).

More than four hundred years have passed now since the foiled plot, and it remains a significant aspect of English historical memory, indeed it is still on the national curriculum of the education system. The contentious event continues to be debated by historians and interested parties alike, and this curiosity shows little sign of decline, considering the wide and varying viewpoints on the topic. Not just set into memory, the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot is ritualised by celebrations and bonfires on every 5 November in the United Kingdom, and by the ceremonial searching the vaults of the House of Lords, where Guy Fawkes was found guarding the gunpowder. Coughton Court in Warwickshire celebrates Bonfire Night every 5 November with the estate's 'Fawkes Feast', which members of the public can attend. The traditional search of the building on the eve of the opening of parliament virtually connects England with its past through communal festivals and official ceremony.

The defeat of Charles I during the English Civil War was for Catholics a disappointment paramount to the anti-climax of the Gunpowder Plot, though hopes rose again with the restoration of Charles II. The new king's life was indebted to the loyalty of English Catholics after the Battle of Worcester. The Catholic community seems, at the very least, to have expected toleration, and in 1661 notable Catholics met at Arundell House in London to draw up a petition to ease the Recusancy Laws. The Venetian Ambassador wrote in July 1661 that, 'It seems that Parliament had some thought of discussing whether for the establishment of universal quiet, it would not be better to grant entire liberty of conscience to all, as in France, to profess and practise religion, without

distinction.<sup>43</sup> It was not to be, however; in 1663 Parliament passed an act to keep and enforce the Recusancy Laws.

An anonymous writer (thought to be the French Minister) wrote in the early eighteenth century, summarizing the religious confusion of the sixteenth century:

Thus England was divided into Protestants and Catholics. But many Protestants, who pretended that the Church of England was not sufficiently reformed, refused to submit to her [Elizabeth's] Government, and formed a third party, called Puritans...That of the puritans is most powerful, consisting of some Bishops, the greatest part of the gentry, and almost all the common people. The Church of England has on her side the King, the greatest part of the nobility and Bishops, and the two universities. Though the Catholics are not so numerous as the Church of England-men and the Puritans, yet they make a considerable part of the State, consisting of some noblemen, powerful by their riches and alliances, and a great number of the common people...But the Church of England hates the Puritans more than the Catholics; the Catholics hate the Puritans more than the Church of England; and the Puritans hate the Catholics more than that church.<sup>44</sup>

This author, writing originally in 1701, took an Anglican-centric view of the numbers and popularity of Elizabethan Catholicism that modern historians may be uncomfortable with. His 'memory' of the past is moulded by the nation's anti-Catholicism, though he does feel that they were significant enough to be mentioned.

After Catholic Emancipation in 1829, an effort was made to reflect on and remember the English Reformation, and especially those Catholics who were executed during religious persecution, between 1534 and 1680. Many of these

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<sup>43</sup> Brian Magee, *The English Recusants: A Study of the Post-Reformation Catholic Survival and the Operation of the Recusancy Laws* (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1938), p. 167.

<sup>44</sup> Anon., 'An Important Discourse Concerning the State of Religion in England and the Reconciliation with Rome', in Sir Richard Steele's *An Account of the State of the Roman Catholick Religion Throughout the World* (London, 1715), pp. 188, 189.

men and women have been beatified or canonised, and are officially recognised as martyrs in the Catholic Church. Even during Elizabeth's reign, Pope Gregory XIII (1572-1585) authorised that the relics and likenesses of sixty-three martyrs be honoured for devotion, and all of these Catholics were formally beatified by Pope Leo XIII in 1886 and 1895.<sup>45</sup> Four rounds of beatification began in 1886 under Pope Leo XIII, who beatified fifty-four men and women in that year, (including John Fisher and Thomas More, as well as eleven of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales, who were later canonised as mentioned above) and nine in 1895 (eight of whom were Benedictine Monks under Henry VIII, the ninth being Thomas Percy, Earl of Northumberland). Pius XI beatified 137 men and women in 1929, including the remaining twenty-nine of the Forty Martyrs who were later canonised. Pope Pius XI canonized John Fisher and Thomas More in 1935, and Pope Paul VI canonised forty men and women in 1970. The last beatifications of English Catholics were those by Pope John Paul II: The Eighty-Five Martyrs of England and Wales in 1987.<sup>46</sup> An obvious absentee from these lists of English Martyrs was Henry Garnet, whose reputation from the Gunpowder Plot continued to taint him. Eighteen Midland Catholics were beatified or canonised in the twentieth-century, including John Ingram of Herefordshire; Alexander Rawlins of Worcestershire; Edmund Gennings of Staffordshire; Robert Dibdale, Robert Grissold and John Sugar of Warwickshire; Edward James, Christopher Buxton, Ralph Sherwin, William Hartley, Edward James, Nicholas Garlick and Robert Ludlam of Derbyshire; Thomas Alfield and Richard Sergeant of Gloucestershire; Robert Johnson of Shropshire; William

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<sup>45</sup> Malcolm Pullman, *The Lives and Times of Forty Martyrs of England and Wales 1535-1680* (London: New Generation Publishing, 2008), p. xvii.

<sup>46</sup> All of this information comes from *The Catholic Encyclopedia*.



Filby of Oxfordshire; and Everard Hanse of Northamptonshire. Edmund Campion and Robert Southwell, while not Midlands men, were missionaries in Midlands counties.

Surprisingly, new Catholic Churches built in the Midlands after Emancipation seldom looked to the English Reformation martyrs for church dedications, choosing instead ancient or Biblical saints most frequently, perhaps reflecting centuries of indignation over the Gunpowder Plot. In the Roman Catholic diocese of Northampton, only three of more than one hundred churches were dedicated to Reformation saints: St Nicholas Owen in Burton Latimer, St John Ogilvie (a Scottish Jesuit) in Corby, and St Thomas More in Raunds. The Roman Catholic diocese of Birmingham is only slightly more representative of Reformation martyrs, with thirteen of nearly two hundred and fifty churches dedicated to them, including four churches of the English Martyrs (in Biddolph, Blackheath, Rugby and Sparkhill), St Edmund Campion in Watlington, St John Fisher and St Thomas More in Burford, St John Fisher in both West Heath and Coventry, St Mary and St Thomas More in Cannock, St Peter's and the English Martyrs in Lower Gornal, and St Thomas More in Coventry, Kiglington and Sheldon. In the Roman Catholic diocese of Nottingham, just eight of more than one hundred and fifty churches were dedicated to English Reformation martyrs, with a church of The English Martyrs in Bakewell, St Thomas More in Caistor, St John Fisher and St Thomas More in Chapel en le Frith, English Martyrs in Derby, a St Margaret Clitherow in both Duffield and Keyworth, and a St Thomas More in both Leicester and Nottingham.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> All of this information comes from Midland Catholic diocese websites.

The new Catholic Churches in Midlands dioceses made no use of their own Midland Catholic Martyrs: Edmund Campion's mission included the Midlands and Nicholas Owen worked in the county houses, but neither were native to the area. The Reformation saints most frequently chosen for church dedications in the Midlands were John Fisher and Thomas More, the two most significant Henrician martyrs, and the blanket category of English Martyrs. With numerous local Midland martyrs available to choose to represent new churches after Emancipation, the question of why they have been overlooked must be asked. It is possible that people were still uneasy with the turmoil of the Reformation even as late as the nineteenth century, whereas John Fisher and Thomas More were relatively 'safe' saints. It may also show that there was no lasting memory of the local martyrs among Catholics. The local Catholic communities may have been swept away and the new Catholic communities of the nineteenth-century chose to commemorate the national Catholic saints who were more prominent.

In the twentieth century the heritage industry gained momentum, its goal to preserve England's material and natural past, a quest in which Catholic family estates from the Reformation period have not been overlooked. Thomas Tresham's architectural legacy is well preserved in Northamptonshire. His principal dwelling at Rushton Hall, with its priest's hole and oratory, and where stonemasons found the Tresham Papers hidden in the walls in 1832, now serves as Rushton Hall Hotel. Tresham's Triangular Lodge, on the Rushton Estate, was built to symbolize the Holy Trinity and is now owned by English Heritage. This is significant because a Catholic symbol is now accepted as a national monument. Lyveden Manor House, built in 1450, was once the principal house on Tresham's

estate. It was acquired by The National Trust in 2013, but is not yet ready for public opening. Tresham began construction on Lyveden New Bield shortly before his death. It remains unfinished, but it owned by The National Trust and open to the public. As with the Triangular Lodge, religious symbolism is present in the architecture. In Moreton-on-Marsh, Oxfordshire, the public can visit Chastelton House, bought by the National Trust in 1991, virtually untouched since the seventeenth century. A house on the site was bought by Robert Catesby in 1604, the year before the Gunpowder Plot, and visitors have noted a hidden closet off a bedroom resembling a priest's hole, which may have hid a Royalist during the Civil War. Mosely Old Hall, built in 1600 in Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, was purchased by The National Trust in 1962. This was the home of the Whitgrave family, Catholic and Royalist, famous as the place where Charles II hid after the Battle of Worcester in 1651. Warwickshire is home to two of the best known Catholic gentry estates in the country. Baddesley Clinton, home of the Catholic Ferrers family, boasting three priest's holes, reputedly constructed by Nicholas Owen, and a secret chapel, is now owned by The National Trust. Coughton Court continues to be home to the Catholic Throckmorton family, and has been in the care of The National Trust since 1946. It too has a priest's hole, and Mass was supposedly celebrated in the Tower Room. In Worcestershire, Harvington Hall now belongs to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham. Humphrey Packington had up to seven priest holes built in the house, four of which are thought to be the work of Nicholas Owen. Visitors can still see a chapel with wall painting of the blood of Jesus Christ. In Derbyshire, Norbury Manor, owned in the sixteenth century by the Fitzherbert family, became a National Trust property in 1987.

In 1910 Bede Camm published an illustrated account of what he considered a lost Catholic England, the manor houses of Catholic gentry, called *Forgotten Shrines*.<sup>48</sup> Camm recorded what he probably thought was a material world on the brink of destruction or irreversible decay. However, because of the heritage industry, many of Camm's descriptions of these homes are still recognisable today. Camm's 'lost' England was confined within the walls of stately homes, with secret chapels, hidden priest holes and relics. As these were part of the English recusant past, they must, according to Camm, therefore constitute part of Catholic identity. Camm had a special interest in the manor houses of the Midlands, notable Harvington Hall in Worcestershire and Baddesley Clinton in Warwickshire. With their moats, priest's holes, chapels and remoteness, these estates were the ideal model for recusant Catholics homes.<sup>49</sup> Camm recounts his 'pilgrimages' to these sites in emotive detail. He recalls his guide's remarks upon entering the grounds of Harvington Hall:

'I always think, when I come along this road, of the words, "Take off they shoes from off the feet, for the place where thou standest is holy ground.'" It was the most striking an utterance as the speaker, alone among the pilgrims, had not the happiness to be a Catholic.<sup>50</sup>

Camm considered his excursions to these homes to be pilgrimages, because he was reflecting on the memory of persecuted Catholics, and also venerating the material objects as relics and shrines. In the churchyard of Harvington Hall is a large crucifix, erected in 1879 for the bicentenary of the martyrdom of John Wall,

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<sup>48</sup> Dom Bede Camm, *Forgotten Shrines: An account of some old Catholic Hall and families in England and of relics and memorials of the English Martyrs* (London: Macdonald and Evans, 1910); a reprinted volume is used for this chapter, published in 2004 by Gracewing in Leominster.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. viii.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254; the original words are from Exodus 3:5.

a Franciscan Friar from Lancashire who settled in Worcestershire, which was commemorated at Harvington. Camm recounts the inscription:

Deus meus et Omnia.  
In memory of  
Father John Wall, O.S.F.,  
In religion Father Joachim of St Anne,  
Who, obeying God rather than man,  
For twelve years ministered the sacraments to the  
Faithful  
In this and other parts of Worcestershire  
In daily peril of death.<sup>51</sup>

This visible and tangible memorial was fitting for a man who, according to Camm, had never been forgotten in Worcestershire, and who remains in person and spirit part of Harvington. Camm wrote:

Almost do we catch sight of him, in his russet robe and bare feet, passing swiftly along the dim, mysterious passages that lead to the hidden chapel in the roof. Still is his memory green among the descendants of his little flock, who cherish with a holy pride their traditions of 'Blessed Father Johnson', their martyred pastor.<sup>52</sup>

At Harvington, John Wall was known affectionately as 'Johnson' which was how his 'beloved memory' was passed down through the generations of recusants and Catholics in the area.<sup>53</sup>

Camm also visualised the memory that material objects could convey, for example the bullet hole in an oak door at Harvington Hall, which was meant for Mary Packington, Lady Yate, who had harboured John Wall, when Protestants from Kidderminster came to search the house. 'What an eloquent story that hole seems to tell!', wrote Camm.<sup>54</sup> Camm also recounted that one of the pilgrims in

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254. A stone slab copy of the crucifix has been erected in St Mary's churchyard, Harvington, indicating that Wall was beatified by Pope Pius XI in 1929 and canonised by Pope Paul VI in 1970.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255-256.

the group would not be content to leave until he himself had stood in one of the priest's holes in the house. Once inside, this man, whom Camm does not name but recorded as a 'Catholic' and 'Rhodes Scholar', contemplated and remembered the priests who had once been sheltered inside the hole, perhaps thinking, as an unnamed priest at Harvington once wrote: 'When you stand in it [a different priest hole in the house], making your devout meditation on the sufferings and joys of the martyrs, you feel as if you were encased in a venerable, saintly relic.'<sup>55</sup>

Camm had much to say on Baddesley Clinton and the Ferrers family, admitting that this house is the most familiar, dear and romantic to him.<sup>56</sup> It is best to quote him directly here:

The old grey walls, reddened with lichen, rise from the waters of the moat with a simple dignity unsurpassed elsewhere: the mullioned windows, blazoned with innumerable heraldic shields, give light to rooms paneled in the blackest oak, in whose dim recesses seem to lurk mysterious spirits of the past; the dark winding corridors, broken by unexpected flights of slippery oaken steps, again to a ghostly room, where the blood of a murdered priest still stains the floor. But the heart of the house is the old chapel where the Master of the house deigns to dwell in His tabernacle, and the haunting legend is inscribed above the door, *Transit Gloria mundi: Fides Catholics manet*.<sup>57</sup>

For Camm the purpose of these pilgrimages was to remember and reflect on the people whose persecution was connected with the house. "Baddesley is now a house of memories", he wrote, 'a shrine of golden deeds, forgotten by the world but dear to the angels of God.'<sup>58</sup> And just as dear to Camm and his group of pilgrims.

In the twentieth century, efforts were also made to research Reformation and post-Reformation Catholic history in the British Isles. The Catholic Record

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257, 258.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 319.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 325.

Society was founded in 1904 with the objective of publishing transcribed and translated primary documents into volumes (Record Series), research papers (Monograph Series), and also a journal, *Recusant History* (recently renamed *British Catholic History*). The impact of the Catholic Record Society has been invaluable for scholars of the Catholic and religious history of the British Isles, and has also helped pave the way for Catholic history as a reputable field of research.

However, even with efforts to preserve England's Catholic past over the past century, anti-Catholic stereotypes survive in popular culture. They are well-developed characteristics of English literature and films, often in the guise of characters who have taken clerical or monastic vows. Gothic fiction is especially generous in this respect, with black-hearted abbesses, lewd priests, merciless inquisitors and reluctantly confined nuns featuring as characters in literary works such as *The Pit and the Pendulum* (1842) by Edgar Allen Poe, *The Monk* (1796) by Matthew Gregory Lewis, *The Italian* (1797) by Ann Radcliffe, and *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) by Charles Maturin.<sup>59</sup> This anti-Catholic tradition is also apparent in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853), which investigates the confrontation between the Anglicanism of her heroine Lucy Snowe and the Catholic surroundings and conditions of her school in the fictional European city of Vilette. Snowe concludes that God and Rome are not one and the same. For these novelists, the memory of England's break with its Catholic past is represented in their novels as a moral tale.

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<sup>59</sup> Patrick O'Malley, *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 1-30, esp. 18 and 19

Irish Catholic population.<sup>60</sup>

In England and the British Isles, remembering Catholicism cannot be separated from the Reformation, and assorted prejudices toward Catholics and their faith still resonate, with the narrative of suspect and 'different' Catholic remaining very strong. Much of this outlook must stem from the engrained English national identity that developed with the Catholic defeats of the Spanish Armada and the Gunpowder Plot, and the belief that God had intervened on behalf of the English and their reformed religion, though some could also be ascribed to the complex social nature of faith communities and an 'us versus them' attitude. Why anti-Catholicism in some respects continues today, in an age of supposedly enlightened secularism, is again complex, but it is clear that the religious conflicts of the early modern age resulted in grievous enduring national trauma.

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<sup>60</sup> *London telegraph*, 16 September 2010.



## 9. Conclusion

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The history of Catholic recusancy in early modern England has been dealt with comprehensively at the national level by many historians. This interest in recusancy is also reflected in a number of county or regional studies but an extensive study of the Catholic communities of the Elizabethan Midlands has not previously been attempted. This dissertation has aimed to demonstrate the importance of a regional study of Elizabethan Catholics with the objective of testing the results against the national model of recusancy, to understand the lived experience of the Midland community.

The Catholics of the Elizabethan Midlands seem to have experienced a refashioning of religion similar to that of their co-religionists in the other counties. They initially experienced religious tolerance, if even unofficially, from the state, only to see this acceptance transform into a relatively high level of persecution and mistrust from the early 1580s. The Catholic community benefitted from the continuing presence of the Marian priests in the county and then from the missionaries who came from the continent, only to see a gradual but steady decline in the number of Catholics by the end of Elizabeth's reign. This is a common feature of Catholic communities throughout England during this period. What makes Catholicism in the Midlands noteworthy is the geographical placement of Catholicism in the counties, in addition to the presence of several distinct characters of the laity, gentry and clergy, both Catholic and Protestant alike, who brought individual flavour to the local communities. Past scholarship

has argued that the Catholic community relied on direct and constant influence from the missionary priests and Jesuits, and therefore could not survive outside of the patronage of Catholic gentry families. This is not the case with Midland Catholicism. This chapter will summarise the basic themes of the previous chapters, assess the continuing consequences of church papism and recusancy in the Midlands after the death of Elizabeth I in 1603, and finally suggest what further research remains to be done in the field.

As demonstrated in chapter 2, the situation was not homogeneous in each Midlands county. Some local areas within counties were able to support Catholic communities without the presence of Catholic gentry – though this does not hold true for Worcestershire. The different Midlands communities both differed from and resembled one another and also the rest of England. Patterns can be seen, but it is unwise to make generalisations. For example, most Midlands counties did not necessarily require a Catholic gentry family to support a lay Catholic community, though an exception to this is Worcestershire.

The geography of some counties had an impact on the pattern of where the Catholic communities lived. This does not seem to be the case for Herefordshire, where Catholics were widely dispersed throughout the county. The town of Worcester, unlike Hereford or Warwick, had no significant recusant population. In Worcestershire Catholicism was only rural, and wholly reliant on the influence of gentry families. In Warwickshire Catholic families were largely based within the Arden forest, which offered natural and dense protection. In Leicestershire, Catholic gentry families lived fairly close to one another within Charnwood forest, in the north-west region of the county. Northamptonshire differed from Leicestershire and Warwickshire in that the Catholic gentry were

not interlinked in close proximity with one another. We can speak of a 'region' with such diversity because of the communities within it, and their ties with one another.

The impact of local government when analysed apparently had no significant influence in eradicating recusancy. Early in Elizabeth's reign, Catholics or conservatives served in local government. Nor was the ecclesiastical government broadly successful in eradicating the problem of recusancy, even though archdeacons and bishops were given responsibility for this by the Privy Council. This became clear to the Privy Council, who eventually instated the High Commission, which empowered laymen and clerics to enforce new laws more strictly, and thus became the first line of defence against recusancy.

Other factors influenced the patterns of Catholicism and recusancy, such as the clergy of the county, both official and clandestine. The newly appointed higher and lower clergy of the reformed church were meant to ensure the attendance of their parishioners at reformed Sunday and holy day services. But the remaining and deprived Marian priests, and the missionaries who began to enter England in 1574, supported the Catholic community in various ways. Even though Elizabeth's long reign ensured the end of national Catholicism, the queen was required to accept a Religious Settlement in 1559 that was far more conservative than she and her Councillors had desired. The forcefulness with which a radical reformation of the church was refused alarmed the queen, and she subsequently dealt very cautiously with Catholicism within her realm until the 1570s, when the continuation of Catholicism could no longer be ignored, and the coincidence of the Northern Rebellion, the threat from Mary Stuart, and

Elizabeth's excommunication by the pope, combined to heighten alarm.<sup>1</sup> This may be the reason why the primary sources immediately make it clear that for over a decade the Catholic community was left undisturbed in the unofficial practice of their faith. Until the 1570s, recusants are absent from the documents consulted until the 1570s.

People who wished to keep the old religion were helped at first by the Marian priests who were either deprived of their livings or, while conforming officially, at least continued to guide parishioners in Catholic practice by celebrating mass and conferring the sacraments. The string of bishops in the dioceses of Worcester and Coventry and Lichfield achieved varying levels of success in suppressing Catholicism. Some, such as Edwin Sandys of Worcester, were simply too radical from the beginning and therefore earned the loathing of many of the people within his jurisdiction, not to mention the queen's disdain. Not until Worcester's third Elizabethan bishop, John Whitgift, was appointed to the see in 1577 were any truly effective measures against recusancy implemented in that diocese. Whitgift was able to handle the administrative tasks necessary to suppress recusancy in his diocese. He was the first bishop of Worcester to accept the existence of recusancy, and was therefore the first to be successful against it. He understood from where the people were receiving religious instruction, and he worked to reform the clergy. On Whitgift's initiative, in the 1580s a stricter stance was imposed on recusants in the diocese of Worcester, meaning that the decline in recusancy in the western half of Warwickshire at that time can be attributed to him. Subsequent Worcester

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Marshall, *Reformation England 1480-1642* (London: Hodder Education, 2003), p. 178.

bishops were less efficient and successful than Whitgift, but the path had already been laid and the momentum continued.

Chapter 3 analysed the impact of the Catholic network. The Catholic network was not just one thread, but rather various threads woven together, sometimes overlapping but never independent. The network became a substitute for the parish church and community, and was essential in keeping Catholics connected with one another and their faith. The Midland communities used networks of kin and family, as well as patron/client relationships to maintain their religious non-conformity.

Midland Catholics also used the network to demonstrate non-violent political resistance. The majority of Catholics did not use aggression or violence to promote their cause, but nor were they complacent or aloof when it came to political matters. Politically savvy Catholics used the network to promote their plight through correspondence, leaflets and petitions. The network offered security and protection to those Catholics, such as Thomas Tresham and Ralph Sheldon, who did engage in political resistance, but also to the wider Catholic community.

While inclusion in the Catholic community necessarily meant non-conformity to some degree, this is not to suggest that Catholics engaged in the network were chiefly defined by non-conformity. The network was a natural response, one that meant loyalty to fellow Catholics and one's own conscience. The network was created to protect the community, but it is not correct to assume that a Catholic needed protection because of militant or anti-Protestant actions. The network kept Catholics united within the political system, especially with Protestant/Catholic patron/client relationships. The network was efficient,

as shown by the fact that Protestant authorities tried to infiltrate it. Because of the variations in the network, not all Catholics and recusants can be categorised as united.

Chapter 4 examined the effect the anti-Catholic laws had on Elizabethan Catholics in the Midlands and their impact on eradicating Catholicism. The Acts of Uniformity and Supremacy of 1559 identified English worship with reformed theology, but Elizabeth's role in the church was unclear. As governor of the church, her ecclesiastical authority was ambiguous, and early in her reign Catholics could manoeuvre around the laws. Theoretically the state opposed Catholicism, but the political and practical dangers of persecution initially meant Catholicism was left unchecked. Various forces caused a dramatic change in policy by the 1580s, including the influence of Mary Stuart, threats from Spain and the influx of seminary priests and Jesuits. Confusion ensued, and Catholics engaged in the network practiced various expedients to evade the Anti-Catholic laws, as well as forms of conformity.

Chapter 5 evaluated how the changes in religion forced Catholics to reconsider their own beliefs and adapt religious rituals and sacraments once medieval practices were no longer of use. This eventually led to a consolidation of Catholic identity that was defined by non-conformity or partial attendance at reformed services and covert practices at home. Like the network, adaptation and innovation was used as a survival mechanism. This adaptation was a key component in Catholic identity, separating them from medieval Catholic practices. Medieval Catholicism, with its reliance upon the sacraments, could not be easily practiced within Elizabethan society, but the Catholic community was keen to observe those rituals that were the vanguard of their faith. The

community chose literature – both medieval and Tridentine – to satisfy their spiritual needs. In some cases, this could be accomplished without the presence of a priest, though this was always considered *in extremis*. In these cases it seems that while Catholics accepted Tridentine teachings, they understood that they could not be practised within their own circumstances. These adaptations and innovations demonstrate enthusiasm and willingness on behalf of the laity and clergy, in which the community practised day-to-day rituals that should only be accepted within doctrine in extreme circumstances. This redefinition of Catholic traditions created new identities. For example, Catholics were encouraged by the clergy to reinterpret the sacraments so they could be practiced individually if no priest were present.

Chapter 6 investigated the dramatic change in the ‘space’ in which Catholic religious rituals could be practiced. Elizabethan Catholics attempted to preserve aspects of pre-Reformation Catholicism in various ways. Some continued to worship within the parish church, now reserved for reformed services. Some kept the sacrality of sites outside of the church such as shrines and wells. Some adapted old practices for new purposes, such as rosary beads or religious books. And some found new spaces on which to impart a sacred quality, such as prisons, sites of executions and domestic spaces. These new reconstructed sacred spaces cultivated a sense of identity for the time that Catholics were congregated there.

Elizabethan Catholics also filled the medieval gap of relics with those from their own community. At execution sites, men and women collected clothing, possessions, blood and bones of the executed, and subsequently had no need of a European relic trade. Showing their adaptability, Catholics were creative in their

choice of devotional books and used works such as Robert Southwell's, which suggested one could use imaginary space as a means for private worship.

While Catholics at times physically separated themselves from Protestants in their space of worship, chapter 7 argued that in most aspects of social life Catholics were included as members of the wider community. Anti-Catholic laws encouraged intolerance, and as such most records relating to Catholics deal with their infractions of the law. We have few recorded instances of religious tolerance. Tolerance is not meant to be equated with religious freedom, but rather a reluctant acceptance of the other that could be revoked without warning.

Midland Catholics seem to have experienced this form of tolerance early in Elizabeth's reign, when Elizabeth's preoccupation was focused on outward conformity. Inside this issue is one of religious identity and communal culture, both of which were largely influenced regionally. This chapter argued that Catholics should not be defined by their struggle against the other. Laws took time to be implemented and then accepted. Catholic and Protestant communities were integrated with one another – Catholics were rarely in hiding, but were adaptable and fluid members of the wider community.

The 'clash' that was discussed in chapter 7 vibrated through the generations. Catholic memory and the memory of Catholicism was evaluated in chapter 8. This chapter argued that the 'memory' of Catholic events in England's past was used as a propaganda tool to promote an idea of anti-Catholicism for the advancement of church and state. Myths and legends surrounding national events such as the Gunpowder Plot and the Spanish Armada facilitated this sense of Protestant national identity. Legislation did not emancipate Catholics until



1829, though social opinion seems to have been slower, with anti-Catholic sentiment still strong today in some aspects of English life.

Another major theme of this dissertation has been an attempt to understand the changes in religious practice within the gentry and the non-gentry laity, as well as seeking to show how they were able to manipulate circumstances in order to keep a sense of Catholic identity. Primary and secondary sources make it clear that a higher proportion of non-gentry laity in the Midland counties remained Catholic than has been previously supposed. They did so either through church papism, recusancy or a combination of the two. Influential gentry families also continued to empathise with the old ways and in general were able to keep a more medieval style of Catholic practice than the non-gentry laity in that they had consistent access to a priest and therefore the sacraments. Though this is not a new contribution to scholarly research, the inclusion of Midland Catholic gentry families in this dissertation was imperative.

If recusancy was born in the 1570s, one could argue that the phenomenon was generational in its character. It is possible that recusancy occurred not necessarily as a result of shifting times and beliefs, but as a consequence of pressure from the state. Obstinate conservatives had limited choices to keep themselves in tune with their beliefs. They could either fall into church papism or dabble with recusancy. Recusancy was not a necessary choice in the first two decades of Elizabeth's reign because the majority of people were satisfied with the queen's leniency. In some cases at this point in the reign, church papists turned into recusants, and some recusants became church papists. Which option one chose seems to have been governed entirely by family circumstances or personal choice.

One interesting conclusion to be drawn from this dissertation is the suggestion that some Elizabethans were able to re-conceptualise medieval Catholicism through surviving Catholic books and objects, church paintings and artefacts. The degree of Catholicism and religious practice among Catholics was inconsistent among the Midland population. It seems that some people traversed from recusancy into church papism or conformity and back again, or vice versa, depending on the supervision of the particular parish or the mood of the time. The very nature of recusancy demanded a certain level of manipulation. Priests frequently visited the homes of gentry families in the region, for example, those of Tresham, Vaux, Throckmorton and Ferrers. Members of these and other gentry families are rarely recorded in the Recusant Rolls. It is possible that those who escaped the Rolls converted outwardly because their spiritual needs were being met by visiting priests. They may have bribed or physically evaded a commissioner, or a combination of these factors may have been involved.

The Mass centres in several gentry homes dotted around some areas of the Midlands effectively created non-parochial communities. People who moved within these communities must have shared a sense of identity. Finding documentary confirmation of how the Catholic community of the Midlands saw themselves in terms of identity has proven elusive, however. Apart from the makeshift communities, identity must have been affected by the influx of missionary priests from the 1570s onwards, though perhaps only directly in gentry circles. What can be surmised to a high degree of certainty is that Catholic identity was more than just the following of doctrine. It became progressively more tangible in that it revolved around the liturgical year and the sacraments.

While it is certain that the enforcement of the recusancy laws became stricter from the 1580s onwards, there is little actual documentation to allow an understanding of the degree of enforcement prior to this period. The relationship between non-conformists and the local government between 1558 and the mid-1570s is vague. What is not vague is the distinction the queen made between one who refused to attend reformed services but remained a loyal subject, and one who openly rejected the Settlement and the Oath of Supremacy or who showed loyalty to foreign Catholic forces. The sporadic use of fines and other penalties in the first decades of Elizabeth's reign, combined with the fact that punishment was generally only delivered to those who had contact with foreign powers, seems to indicate that recusancy was primarily a political issue. Religious and economic factors certainly also played their part in motivating the recusancy laws, but they were not the primary goals of such persecution.

It also seems that a change in recusant and conservative practices occurred around the time that many Marian priests were dying, in the 1570s. Conservatives had several choices: conformity, recusancy or church papism. These options did not necessarily differ from those when many Marian priests were still living and working in the Midlands, but it is possible that as circumstances changed some conservatives re-evaluated their situation and standpoint. It is difficult to find evidence of this in the documents, however. In all probability such confirmation would not have been documented, as this is the period when recusancy was born and documentation against it began.

The enforcement of the Religious Settlement had little initial success against the conservatives. This was due to a number of reasons, but principally because the local authorities charged to initiate it were not up to the task. Either

by choice or by circumstances, many Justices were unable to collect the initial 12d. fine for missed services. No documentation of this fine being paid or even charged to a recusant was found in surviving Midlands parish registers. For the first two decades of Elizabeth's reign, the Religious Settlement was less successful than the queen and Council expected.<sup>2</sup> Even so, serious attempts to redesign it did not occur until 1581, when a new statute against recusants was implemented, that made recusancy punishable by fines of £20 per lunar cycle for absence from reformed church services. But, like the Religious Settlement, the statute of 1581 faced early problems that were both practical and administrative. For example, in order to enforce the fine of £20, a recusant's guilt first had to be proven in order that an indictment could be issued to collect the fine. These fines began to be recorded in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls in 1582.

New statutes were passed in 1586 and 1593, but the state discovered that recusancy could not be easily suppressed. From the Recusant Rolls of Warwickshire it is clear that there were approximately thirty-five staunch recusants in Warwickshire between 1592 and 1603. While heavier penalties led some to conform, others became increasingly obstinate. Recusants had several means of remaining uncompromising and evading authorities. They moved between parishes, counties or even countries; they racked up fines and risked forfeiture of land; or they simply paid their fines. It seems that the government did not expect such resistance, as they were required continually to update the recusancy laws.

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<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey R. Elton, *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 287.

Even with the heightened enforcement of laws and fines, it is clear that recusancy was not principally motivated by the financial needs of the state. The queen and council would have been well aware that the vast majority of her subjects could not pay the high fines. The threat of heavy fines and loss of land was designed to persuade people into conformity, not poverty. Analysis of the primary sources confirms the idea that recusancy was a political issue for the state, rather than a religious or economic matter. Recusancy was never used to finance foreign or domestic initiatives – it simply was not profitable enough in Elizabeth's reign.

The Religious Settlement and recusancy laws failed to suppress Catholicism in England. The climax of the heightened fines and persecution of recusants was undoubtedly the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, though even the anti-Catholic campaigns this provoked never succeeded in suppressing Catholicism in England. But the Gunpowder Plot left a rift between the two religious communities that was slow to dissipate. Midland connections with the Gunpowder Plot are extensive and well known. Many of the conspirators were related to each other and also to the Throckmorton family of Coughton Court. Robert Catesby, the leader of the plotters, was probably born in Lapworth, Warwickshire, and his mother, Anne, was a Throckmorton.<sup>3</sup> Catesby was related to other Midland recusant families and conspirators, such as the Wintour brothers and Francis Tresham of Northamptonshire.<sup>4</sup> Catesby's servant, Thomas Bates, who rode to Coughton Court the day after the plot was foiled to deliver the news, was also from Lapworth. He is recorded in the second commissioners'

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<sup>3</sup> Antonia Fraser, *Faith and Treason: The Story of the Gunpowder Plot* (New York: Random House, 1996), p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

report of recusants in Warwickshire in 1592 as having had a baby boy baptised into the Catholic faith.<sup>5</sup> John Grant of Norbrook House near Snitterfield, Warwickshire, was also involved in planning the plot. The conspirators used his home, which was frequently a temporary shelter for Catholic priests.<sup>6</sup>

The men who hatched the Gunpowder Plot were second-generation recusants, born well into Elizabeth's reign.<sup>7</sup> Not having known the relatively peaceful years of Elizabeth's early reign, they knew only the struggle that their parents and kin faced with heightened fines and penalties from the 1580s onwards. The conspirators grew up in a recusant tradition that made them more militant than the previous generation. The reaction of this group of Midland recusants was desperate and, it transpired, doomed. The Gunpowder Plot resulted not in religious tolerance, but a heightened campaign of anti-Catholicism that greatly surpassed the aftermath of the Somerville Plot in Warwickshire twenty-three years earlier.

While on the queen's wishes religious tolerance was the unofficial mode of religious co-habitation, this could only be sustained until foreign Catholic forces threatened the queen and Council, resulting in harsh actions against English Catholics. The temperate approach which followed the Religious Settlement of 1559 turned into persecution by the authorities and mistrust from communities. The Midlands was not necessarily a region that witnessed a high persecution rate, indeed if one looks only at the Recusant Rolls, it would seem

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<sup>5</sup> SP 12/243, f.202. Book containing the second certificates of the Commissioners for the county of Warwick to the Council', November (?) 1592.

<sup>6</sup> Fraser, *Faith and Treason*, pp. 113-114.

<sup>7</sup> For example, Francis Tresham was born in 1568, along with Robert Wintour. Guy Fawkes was born in 1570, Thomas Wintour was born in 1572, and Robert Catesby was born in 1573. *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 70, 91.

that Midlands counties such as Warwickshire was home to few non-conformists. In the year 1593/1594, for example, only five recusants were recorded in the rolls for Warwickshire. The numbers recorded in some other Midland counties give a different perspective. Over two hundred recusants were recorded in the same year for Staffordshire; 122 in Worcestershire; twenty-two in Northamptonshire; eight in Gloucestershire; seven in Derbyshire; and two in Leicestershire.<sup>8</sup>

The fact that the recusants of counties such as Warwickshire were not heavily persecuted economically does not diminish the value of a local study of Catholicism in that county. On the contrary, since we know that there were over 200 Catholics in the county in 1592, the vast majority of whom managed to remain anonymous in the Recusant Rolls, it is especially desirable to understand how they managed to evade detection. In any case, the rolls for the following year (1594/1595) record far fewer recusants for Northamptonshire and Worcestershire, at twenty-six and twenty-three respectively, so it is possible that the sheriffs of these counties expended much energy in finding recusants only to slacken off in later years, or else their enforcement of the anti-Catholic legislation was effective.

The transformation of Catholic culture was a very gradual and lengthy process, and in order to understand the catalyst for this transformation of Catholicism, a more expansive time span must be considered. From the outset, this dissertation has demonstrated that the Catholic community of the Midlands was prepared to develop new ways of worship in order to continue to practice

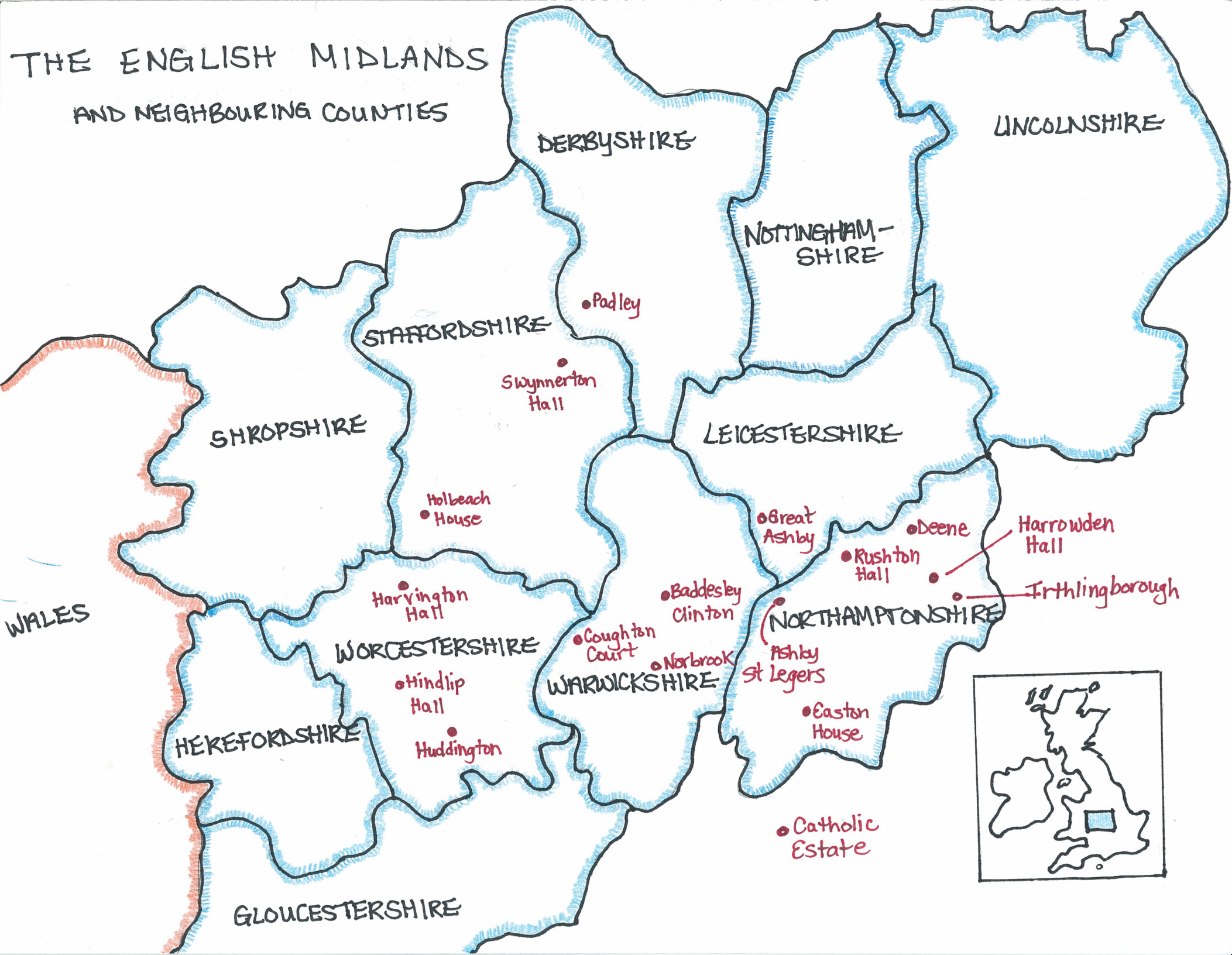
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<sup>8</sup> Hugh Bowler, *Recusant Roll 2, 1593-4*, Catholic Record Society, Records Series vol. 57, 1965.





the faith they knew. Far from being gently persuaded or even bullied into submission by the queen, Council or reformed clergy, the obstinate Catholics of the Midlands proved that while they were willing to be eclectic, fluid and inconsistent in their religious practice, they were not willing to conform to the Religious Settlement. Worship habits were not stagnant among the Elizabethan Catholics of the Midlands, gentry and non-gentry laity alike. Even the deprived clergy accommodated to new circumstances and at times went from being a parish priest to a priest disguised as a gardener, or a tutor or schoolmaster. The Elizabethan Catholics of the Midlands cannot solely be categorised into groups such as grudgingly conformist or obstinately recusant. Some chose one of these two religious categories, but even more found a way to manoeuvre through the political and religious system in order to find a space in which they were at least comfortable to worship according to the rites of the religion that had been a major force within their families and communities for centuries.

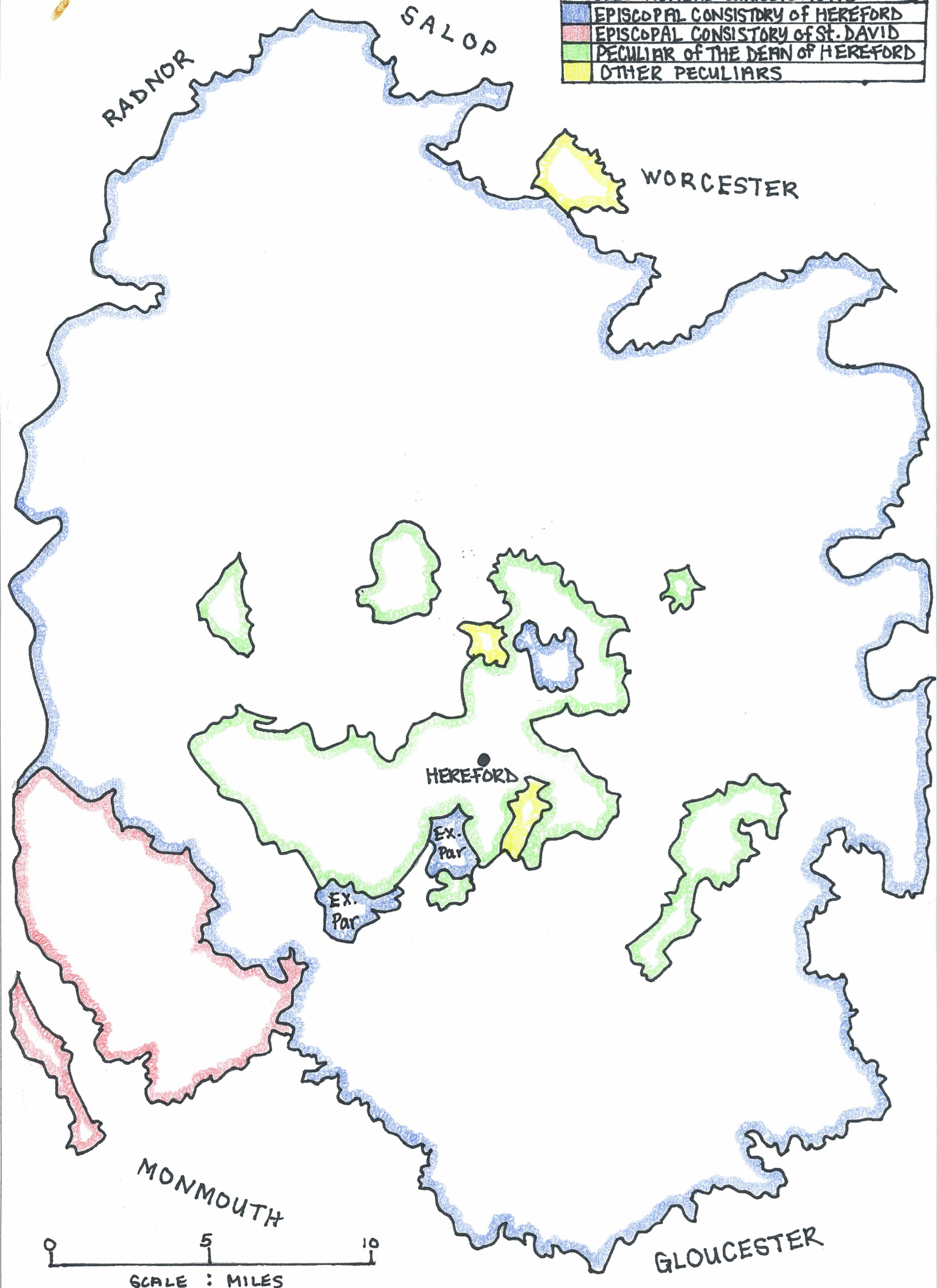


# THE ENGLISH MIDLANDS AND NEIGHBOURING COUNTIES



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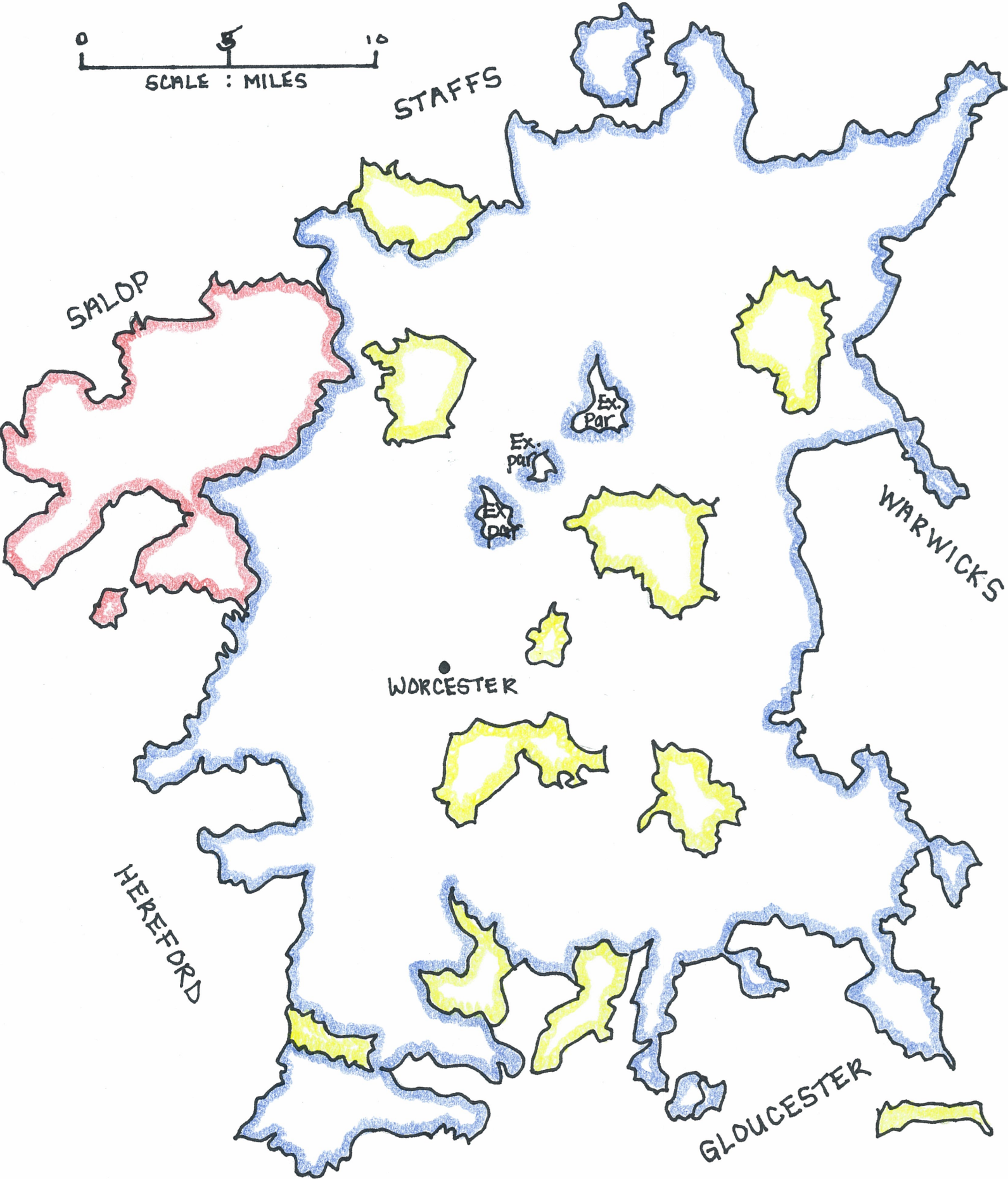
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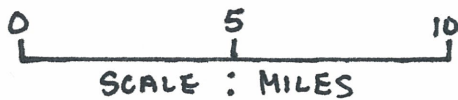
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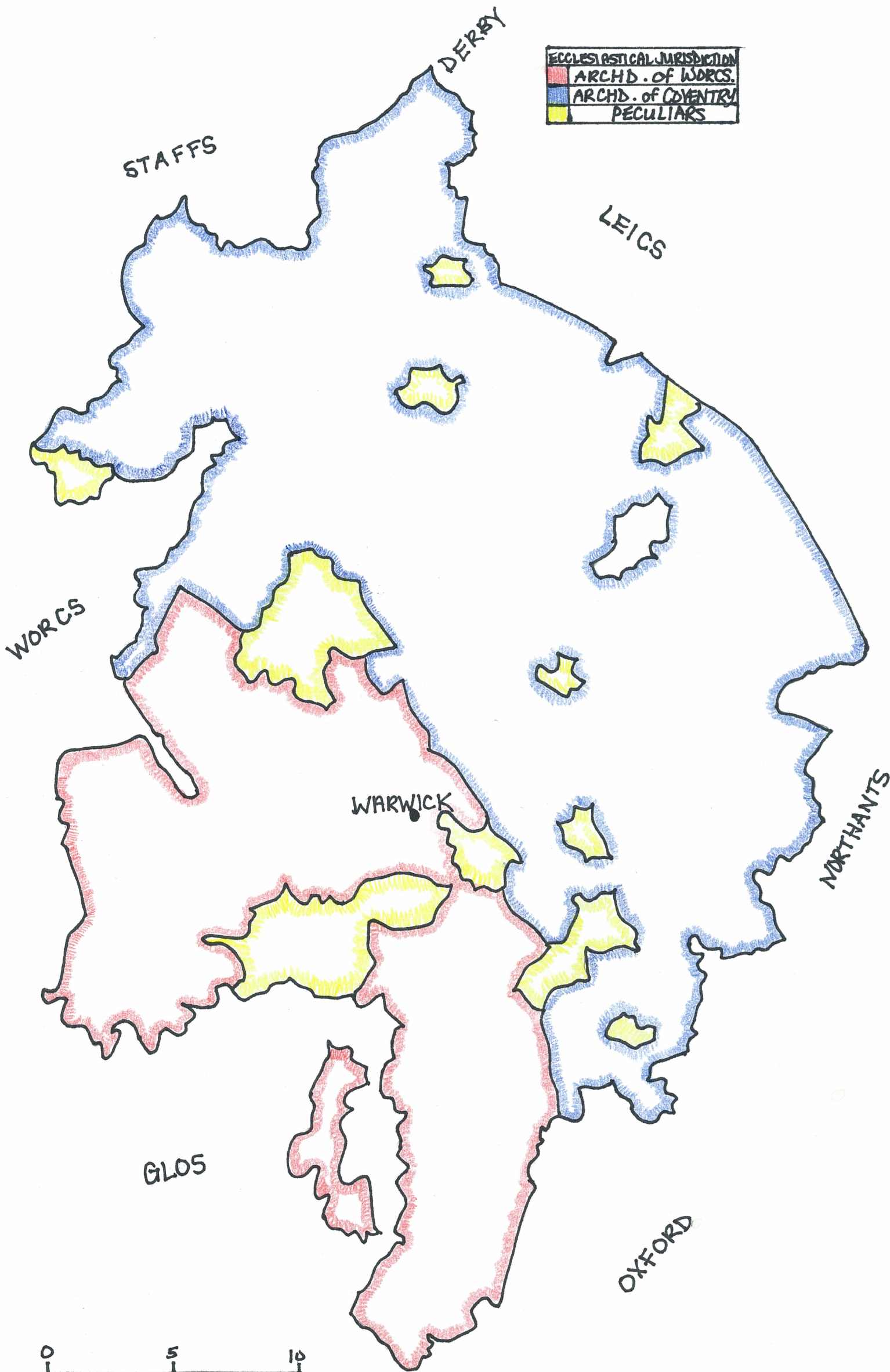
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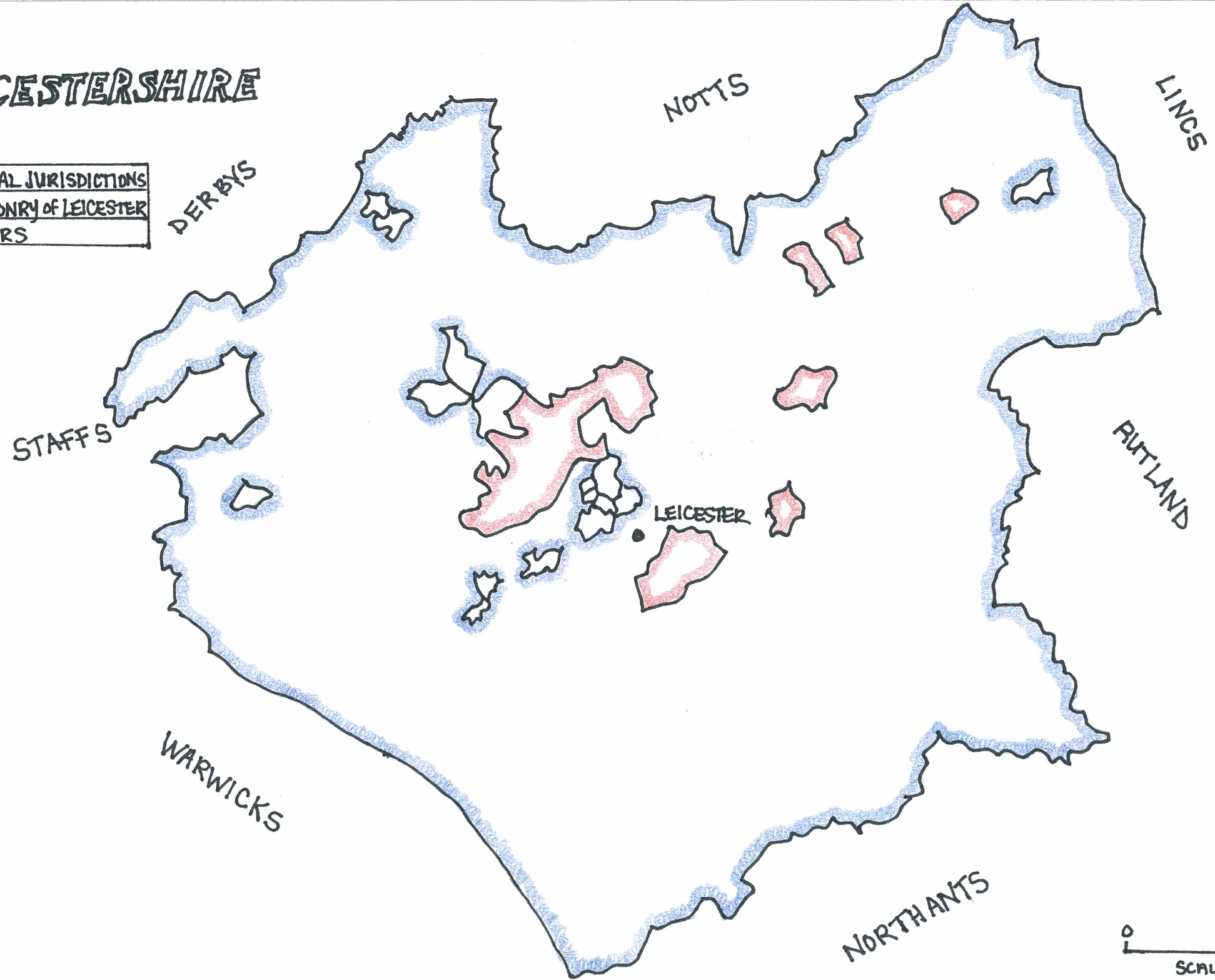


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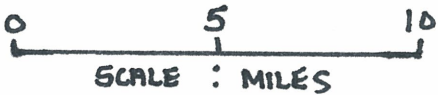
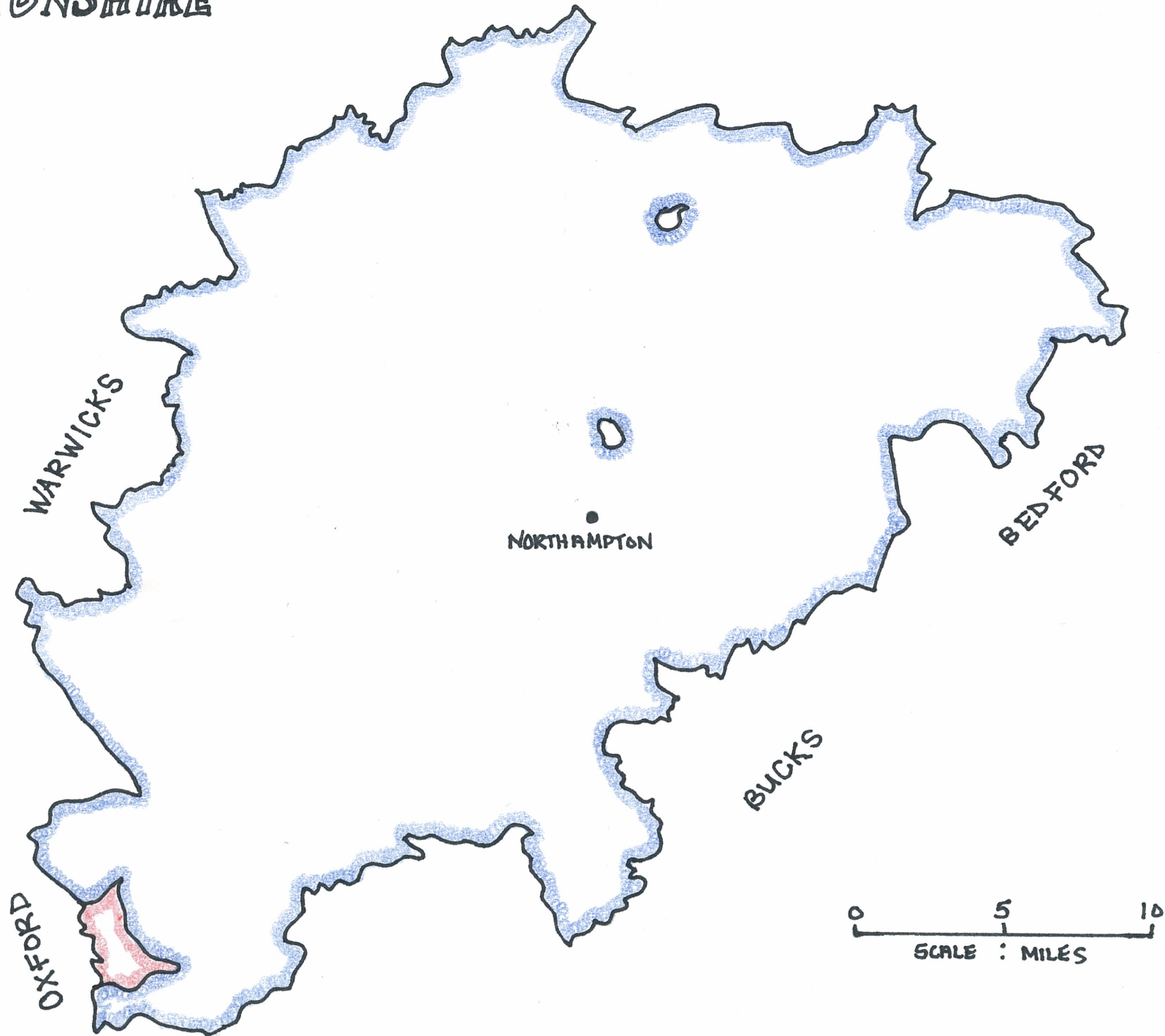
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